

# Issue 144



August 30th, 2021

I and so many of us are saddened by the passing of Nanci Griffith at 68. Some singers are good, some are truly great, and the rare few can move you to tears. Nanci Griffith was one of the rare few.

Charlie Watts is no longer with us. To say we lost a giant (at age 80) would be to seriously understate the man's titanic talent and influence. Watts was the Rolling Stones' driving force, a rock-steady powerhouse, yet one who also played with an inimitable sense of jazz-informed swing. The rock world will never again be the same.

We are honored to announce a new contributor: Ed Kwok. Ed spent his formative years taking things apart. He subsequently trained as an electrical engineer at Imperial College London in the 1980s, and got caught up in the high-end wave. His early ambition was to be an analog audio designer, but he ended up in digital military electronics. Ed then retired from engineering and relocated back to Hong Kong to concentrate on a financial career. He enjoys the computer audio space, considering it partly science and partly high-end art.

Ed founded the Asia Audio Society ([asiaaudiosoc.com](http://asiaaudiosoc.com)) with some like-minded friends, with the aim of crystallizing the essence of high-end audio reproduction.

In this issue: Ray Chelstowski interviews [Stephen Duffy](#), whose post-Duran Duran band the [Hawks](#) has been an undiscovered gem – until now. J.I. Agnew begins an interview series with [Martin Theophilus](#) and the remarkable [Museum of Magnetic Sound Recording](#). Michael Walker offers a tribute to [Nanci Griffith](#). I interview the members of rock band Augustus about [Ragtime World](#), their new [Octave Records album](#). Anne E. Johnson can't get enough [J.S. Bach](#), or [Creedence Clearwater Revival](#). Russ Welton delves deeper into [subwoofer placement](#). John Seetoo considers the record-at-home revolution of [multitrack cassette recorders](#).

Ken Sander works at [The Psychedelic Supermarket](#). B. Jan Montana continues his [pilgrimage to](#)

[Sturgis](#). Jay Jay French and Joe Rock wrap up the question: what do radio stations consider [classic rock?](#) Stuart Marvin ponders [the future of jazz clubs](#). Adrian Wu continues his series on [notable analog recordings](#). Tom Gibbs reviews [new SACD releases](#). Rudy Radelic begins a series on keyboardist and composer extraordinaire [Lyle Mays](#). Ed Kwok gives us the first part of a comprehensive [overview of computer audio](#). The *Copper* A/V squad hits home with some [Uber upgrades](#), gets [no respect](#), [makes a splash](#), and sits [in the cheap seats](#).



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- FD

# ***Ragtime World* by Augustus: New Rock from Octave Records**

[Octave Pitch](#)

Written by Frank Doris



Octave Records' latest release, [Ragtime World](#) by Augustus, offers the band's distinctive blend of melodic indie, alt-rock, post-rock and other not-quite-categorizable music. Since 2014, [Augustus](#) has toured the US and recorded five previous studio albums. Their core two-guitars-bass-drums-vocals sound is spiced with a variety of electric and acoustic guitars and amps (vintage guitar heads will have a lot of fun identifying the various gear, all plain to hear on this high-resolution recording) and additional sounds including lap steel guitar, mandolin and even a Mellotron.

Featuring Colin Kelly (guitars, keyboards, vocals) and Jim Herlihy (guitars, mandolin, Mellotron) with John Demitro (bass, lap steel, percussion) and Forrest Raup (drums and percussion), *Ragtime World* offers an ear-catching and thoughtful variety of songs, reflecting what the band was feeling during the onslaught of the pandemic, when, like every other band, their touring schedule came to a complete stop.

*Ragtime World* was recorded at Animal Lane in Lyons, Colorado in pure DSD using the Sonoma recording system. It's available as a limited-edition release of 1,000 hybrid SACD discs with the master DSD layer and a CD layer. In addition, the album is available as a download bundle including

DSD64, DSDDirect Mastered 192kHz/24-bit, 96kHz/24-bit and 44.1kHz/16-bit PCM. *Ragtime World* was produced by Nate Cook and recorded and mixed by Jay Elliott, with Giselle Collazo co-recording and co-mixing and Jessica Carson as executive producer.

The music spans a variety of moods, from the rockers “Carry All the Weight,” “Past Life” and “Leave the Lights On” to the ethereal “Daisies,” and the spare, fingerpicked acoustic guitar of the title track. The instruments and equipment included a 1975 Gibson Les Paul Deluxe, 1997 Fender Stratocaster electric and Guild and Martin acoustic guitars, a Hammond organ, Yamaha DX-7 and Roland JD-XI synthesizers and a Yamaha grand piano, Fender Princeton, Vox AC-15 and Silvertone amps, and more.

I spoke with Colin and Jim about the making of *Ragtime World*.

**Frank Doris:** How did you guys get together? How did you decide to do the album? Did you have any kind of concept or did it just kind of come together spontaneously?

**Jim Herlihy:** One day we were both at a show, a friend's show at a real kind of divey bar in town. And [after a few] drinks we decided that how great would it be to like start our own band together. There was another friend who had a similar vision, and we got together and started hammering out what was the very first incarnation of Augustus, which has morphed considerably from [around 2013] then to now. Fast forward to 2019, and we're wrapping up three years of consistent touring. Then the pandemic hit. Late last year we got approached by Octave about doing a record. *Ragtime World* came together much differently than previous records.

**Colin Kelly:** The normal thing we do is bring songs to the table and then we tour on them. This record was different in that we basically wrote everything right before we went into the studio, rehearsed a couple of times and then just captured it on the record, as opposed to just touring [the songs] for months and months and really living within those tunes. We had to make decisions on the fly and they're now just permanently out there!

**FD:** Was it different recording in an “audiophile” studio where you were extremely conscious of getting the sound a certain way, as opposed to typical multitracking and mixing?

**CK:** Definitely. It was eye-opening. Even just mixing in analog. It was a slower process and we'd always worked really quickly, making a record over a weekend or in 10 days. Also, [with] having to work within a certain number of tracks, there was only so much we could do [as opposed to having unlimited tracks to work with]. That was really cool, to be kind of held back from taking things too far and maybe compromising the tune.

**FD:** Did you work out the arrangements right on the spot?

**JH:** Over years of touring in a four-piece, two guitars, bass, drums lineup and the way Colin writes songs, we had worked out a consistent sort of guitar blend through the years. We typically have specific ideas of, if this guitar does this, the other guitar should do something else. If one guitar is texturally this way, this other guitar should maybe be texturally another way. There's latitude within that for interpretation, but [we have an] underlying framework that carried over into this session.

**FD:** I hate to use the words “post-rock” or “postmodern rock,” but I get the sense that your music is

borne out of everything that's come before it. It really sounds like your own thing.

**JH:** Thank you. We appreciate being uncategorizable! We try for that.

**FD:** How do you come up with lyrics?

**CK:** There are definitely some pandemic kinds of feelings on this record. [For example,] "Daisies" is about wanting to protect your partner and dealing with those anxieties. Another song is about feeling like you're feeling guilty over a past life.

I don't know how other people dealt with all the free time [we had during] the pandemic, but I got very contemplative and realized that certain things that seemed under our control weren't, and [the other way around].

**FD:** Who are your influences and what bands do you like?

**JH:** I've thought about this a lot. And I think my all-time favorite band is the Beatles. Maybe that's a common answer, but you just can't take away [the impact of] their entire catalog. I like modern stuff too. Let me call on our big Radiohead fans.

**FD:** What are your plans for touring once that starts up again?

**CK:** We're going to slowly try and get back to playing again. We have some big gigs coming up and in Denver we're playing an underground music showcase this month. We're going to kinda see how things are going, and maybe we'll have to through the next year. We kind of got burned out on touring before the pandemic hit.

**JH:** We were basically doing the DIY thing, doing everything, making all the arrangements, and it's hard to stay creative and stay present, stay positive when so much of one's energy is put into sending e-mails and booking and [things like that] and not playing your instrument. But we'd love to get back into playing when the world is ready to have us.

**CK:** This is definitely a time for rebalancing.

**FD:** There's the title of your next album!

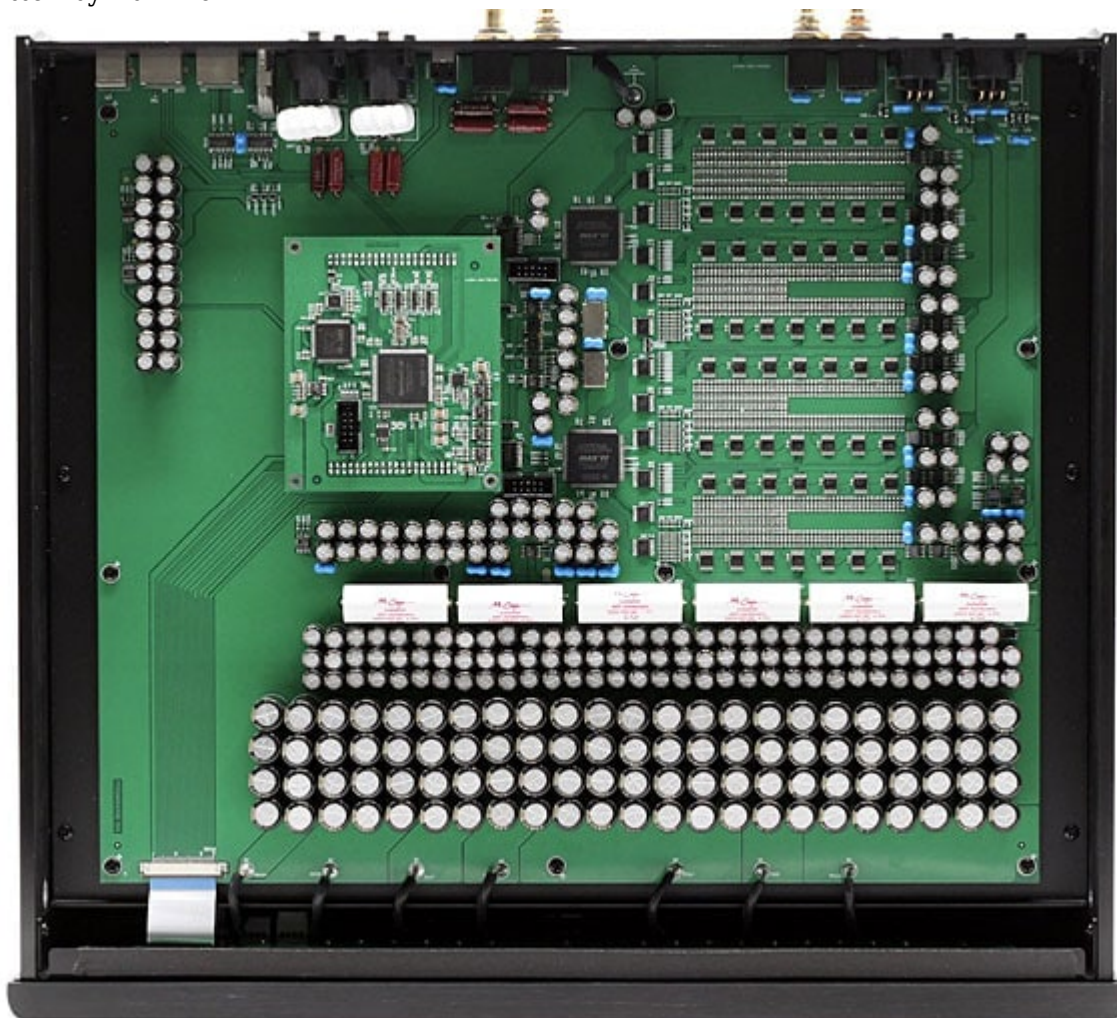
[\*\*Click here to order \*Ragtime World\* by Augustus.\*\*](#)



# Moving to Computer Audio: A Comprehensive Overview, Part One

[Deep Dive](#)

Written by Ed Kwok



## An Individual Approach to Computer Audio

Mention the words “computer audio” and it is likely to mean different things to different people. To traditional audiophiles, it could mean convenient access to their music collection, be it ripped CDs or streaming, while ultimate-performance enthusiasts would naturally marry high-resolution formats with the latest DAC technology. The younger generation may be drawn to the user-friendly way of enjoying music from a familiar smartphone interface. Computer hobbyists can find an additional way to enjoy a favorite pastime via high-res music listening, and specification enthusiasts can indulge in a race to the next dB.

The good news is that the *hobby* of computer audio can provide enjoyment to more people than just traditional audiophiles, and in more ways than before. A larger market results in greater variety and better-quality products at better prices, and that is good for audiophiles. The current availability of a wide range of quality DACs at the \$1,000 to \$2,000 price point is an example.

However, computer audio has also brought a hornet's nest of sometimes complicated hardware and software setup requirements, (sometimes unnecessary) jargon, and wildly differing and often less-than-helpful advice. Plenty of arguments on chat groups lead nowhere, and many need attention from the moderator. There was less "noise" in the heyday of vinyl, when audiophiles had more consensus on the direction of how to achieve the best sound from records, and what was necessary to get there. Back then it was possible for a dedicated audiophile to audition most of the leading sources, amplifiers and speakers, and in the most effective combinations, and this carried over to much of the CD era.

In the world of computer audio, the greater complexity means that there are simply too many variables for even the most dedicated enthusiast to be an expert on everything. No one can possibly try every type of software, computer, DAC, LAN switch, cable, power supply and so on and in all possible configurations. Even a conceptually simple test between any of these can be hard to arrange, and A/B comparisons are either hard to do or impossible. For example, how would someone compare the sound quality of Tidal via two different internet service providers feeding the same hi-fi system in the same room?

In a world where no one has the same goals, systems or circumstances, then everyone is right, because they have figured out what works for *them*. It is my belief that in the era of computer audio, the audiophile must march to his or her own beat, so if you disagree with what I am writing, good for you!

## **Objectives**

Why consider computer audio? Many if not most *Copper* readers are experienced audiophiles with a good sounding high-end system that represents a significant investment in time and money. Equally important, readers already possess the most important measuring instrument - a trained set of ears.

Some may be interested in an easy way to add streaming audio to an existing system, while others may want to go all-in and retire the CD transport, and still others may want to move towards a whole-house network setup with different systems for different music or rooms.

The desired level of technology involvement is a consideration. One should be able to enjoy computer audio without having to do computer engineering. Yet if computer engineering is your thing, then why not? This is, after all, a hobby, and if someone says you are wasting time assembling Raspberry Pis but that is what you enjoy, then you know what to do. Already we can see there is not going to be a one-size-fits-all solution.

My basic philosophy is to do what is right to maximize your own enjoyment. To make the hobby sustainable, my belief is that one should aim to retain as much of their existing system as possible. Incremental rather than wholesale changes are preferred, so that progress can be made in a step-by-step rather than a random fashion. In this article, I would like to discuss some common considerations based on my own experience.

## **A Personal Note**

I may be the luckiest audiophile in the world. On a given day I could be treated to a Chopin Nocturne played on a Steinway Model A. How about a Bach Cello Suite played on an 1840 Kennedy cello? Maybe a Salzedo tango played on a Lyon & Healy concert grand harp? *All this right in my own lounge*. You see, my family members are gifted musicians and there is often live music in the house. The experience of a concert instrument unleashed at close range is astounding - once heard, it is hard to view recorded music in the same realm.



But live music in an ideal setting does not happen on demand. I also like a variety of genres, composers and artists. Like many UK audiophiles, I spent too many evenings tuning my Linn Sondek turntable to sound euphoric on a small selection of records (in reply to my good friend Dr. Adrian Wu). Imperial College, where I studied electrical engineering, had an active audio society. Manufacturers such as Meridian, Naim and Dynavector would come to demo their equipment. They must have thought we had good ears because as students we certainly did not have good credit.

When CD arrived in 1982, it did not deliver “perfect sound forever” but it did bring the enjoyment of convenience that enabled each listening session to have more music and less fiddling around. (I concede that some folks prefer to fiddle around and that’s fine.) As CD sound quality improved over the years, it brought a welcome level of consistency and enjoyment across genres. I began to buy CDs exclusively but kept my Linn.

### **iTunes: the First Popular Computer Audio**

In 2005, along with my first iPod came my interest in iTunes which, for me, was a defining product in computer audio. iTunes was not intended to be a high-end product and its sound quality was sufficient only for casual listening, but for the first time, I could easily browse my entire CD library and find any track by artist, album or song. Whereas before I felt I did not have enough CDs and often struggled to find something to listen to, now the effect was like having a larger library at no additional outlay. I transferred my entire CD collection to the computer in lossless formats and since I kept my originals, I could use the CD transport whenever better sound was required. But, I thought, what if there could be an iTunes with sound approaching or even comparable to a CD transport?

### **High-Resolution Computer Audio Software**

Bit-for-bit computer audio software such as the [JRiver Media Center](#) (PC) and [Audirvana](#) (Mac) promises to combine iTunes-like easy browsing with much improved sound quality. They were easy to set up and operate – if you could install Word, you could handle JRiver. When I changed to JRiver in 2010, computer audio sound quality was some way below a CD transport, but the combination of an entire music library controlled from the listening chair and with good enough sound quality was persuasive.

JRiver had two key audiophile features. Memory playback involves the pre-loading of an entire track from a hard drive to semiconductor memory before the first note is played. Many things happen when music is read from a disk drive. The disk spins to the angle where the track is stored, powerful motors move the magnetic heads to the correct position, and the data is read, checked for read errors and re-read if necessary. With so much going on, some audiophiles could even hear differences between different models of hard drives. With memory playback, however, the computer merely needs to feed the track from memory to audio hardware during playback. By decreasing the work performed in real time, the sound quality could be improved.

JRiver could send the audio data directly to compatible audio hardware – at the time often a professional sound card such as a [Lynx](#) or [ESI](#) – via a technology used in studios called ASIO (Audio Stream Input/Output) that gave much better sound because it bypassed Windows’ multiple layers of audio processing. Microsoft’s more recent WASAPI tries to do the same thing but does not sound as transparent in my experience. With user-friendly bit-perfect software like JRiver, computer audio

began to gain traction.

## **Building a Music Library**

The availability of a digital music library is, of course, critical. Most audiophiles have hundreds of CDs or even thousands, so this can form a good basis. Transferring (“ripping”) CDs to a computer for personal use is legal and accepted (see [About Piracy - RIAA](#)). [Exact Audio Copy](#) is a popular software utility (see [Tom Gibbs' article in Issue 143](#)), and, for whatever software you might decide upon, a lossless audio format, usually FLAC or AIFF, should be chosen. The software should be set up to automatically fill in the fields for artist, album, track and genre by matching the CD with an online database (the computer needs to have internet access during ripping), but manual editing is sometimes required. Ripping 1,000 CDs sounds daunting, but it is not that hard once you set up a production line.

One can of course also purchase tracks, albums and entire libraries online, and some of my favorite albums are now available in hi-res. However, I think there is something wrong with having to purchase the same music three times - the first time for vinyl, the second time for CD and now for hi-res, so I have kept my purchases to new releases.

Nowadays, by far the biggest source of music for computer audio is hi-res streaming. I am a fan of Tidal HiFi because it caters to my musical tastes (classical and jazz) and the audio quality is excellent. If Tidal suits you, there is no need to rip your CDs. Simply take out a subscription to [Tidal](#) HiFi and enjoy a library of 60 million tracks at CD-quality or better. Tidal hi-res is streamed in MQA format and my experience has been very positive. The big announcement in hi-res streaming this year (2021) was the availability of Apple Music in hi-res, and audiophiles will need to figure out how best to use it and whether it has competitive sound quality.

## **USB DACs**

Computer audiophiles have long recognized that computers are bad places in which to put audio hardware such as DACs. The inside of a computer is an extremely noisy electrical environment and the switching power supplies are designed for electrical efficiency and not sound quality. A few manufacturers have made efforts to design audiophile sound cards but with mixed results.

When high-end USB input DACs became available that allowed computer audiophiles to move the DAC outside of the computer, sound cards went out of fashion overnight. USB DACs further improved once engineers figured out how to turn what is basically a dirt-cheap data link into a high-end interface. Nowadays pretty much all USB DACs use asynchronous transfer, which improves sound quality by increasing the isolation between the DAC and the computer.

## **Directly Connecting a Windows or MacOS Computer to a DAC**

At this point, we have a PC or a Mac running bit-perfect software directly connected to a USB DAC. Sound quality has improved but it is probably still way below a CD transport. Why is that?

If you open Task Manager on a PC or Activity Monitor on a Mac, you will see its doing hundreds of tasks at the same time. All those tasks enable office workers to get their documents done, work-from-home folks to do video conferencing, students to research their homework and everyone else to

watch YouTube and play games at the same time. Very few tasks have anything to do with audio, and every unnecessary task is detrimental to sound quality because it makes the computer work harder for no gain. How can Windows or MacOS possibly compete with a dedicated CD transport that is designed specifically for music playback?

You could try using “optimizing” software that streamlines Windows or MacOS by shutting off some unnecessary tasks. But shut off too many and the computer stops working. It is simply impossible to turn Windows or MacOS into something they are not.

Running hundreds of concurrent tasks requires powerful processors. Look under the hood of any recent computer, even a laptop, and you will see at least a quad-core processor that uses so much power it needs fancy cooling. All that power is consumed by billions of transistors switching on and off at mind-boggling speeds. Imagine 30 billion tiny light switches inside your computer flipping on and off three billion times a second, happily generating electrical noise and RF interference.

### **Audiophile Computers**

If you must use Windows, you can consider an “audiophile computer.” Potential European suppliers include [Audio PC Shop](#) and [Pachanko Labs](#), and some suppliers use chassis from a company called [HDPLEX](#).

Some argue that equipment upstream of an asynchronous USB DAC cannot affect sound because bits are bits. As audiophiles, you must trust your ears.

Look inside an audiophile computer and you should see a gaming-grade computer motherboard. (The best-quality motherboards are designed for eSports.) The motherboard may have some modifications, such as higher quality clock chips, to make it more suitable for audio. You should find a medium-power processor – appropriate for the job and with reduced electrical and fan noise. Quality solid state drives such as Samsung are standard. No audio engineer expects you to drive your high-end DAC from a consumer motherboard so look for a separate audio-grade USB or SP/DIF/AES board. A linear power supply is preferred but adds considerably to the cost. Decent casework completes the picture. If you must use MacOS, your options are effectively limited to Apple’s product line.

With an audiophile computer, sound quality has improved to the limit of what can be done with a computer directly connected to a DAC, but in my experience may still be below what can be heard from a high-end CD transport.

The fundamental problem is that the PC industry does not make computers designed for audiophiles. Development and tooling costs are high and factories are running flat-out, shipping 500 office and gaming computers *every second*. To them, the audiophile market is but a rounding error – it does not pay to make computers designed for us. The audiophile computers I see advertised, even those incorporating significant engineering, are still office or gaming computers at heart. (There is a better place for these in a computer audio system, see my comments in the next installment.) In the same way that a heavily-modified production car still cannot match a specialist racer up Pikes Peak, a computer based on standard parts will have difficulty matching the sound quality of a CD transport.

### **Linux, and Streamers Designed for Audio**

If Windows or MacOS involves an uphill battle, why not find a better alternative?

Streamers (or network players) can play music from your ripped CD library stored on disk or

network drive and from your online sources such as Tidal hi-res, all at high-end sound quality. They connect to your existing DAC, can be controlled from iPad, smartphone or another device, and are not that expensive. How is this possible? Enter the Linux operating system.

Unlike Windows or MacOS, Linux is open sourced (any computer engineer can work with it) and configurable for optimum performance for each application. Your router runs Linux, and so does your smart TV, smart doorbell and your Mercedes. Did I mention SpaceX rockets? Linux's configurability means high-end manufacturers can offer minimalist software configurations that do away with all those sound-quality-sapping superfluous tasks.

With much less processing work to be done, a genuinely lower-power processor will suffice. In a stroke of good fortune, it turns out that smartphone processors are very suitable for audio streamers. Smartphone processors are low-power (consuming only a few watts), low-noise, and suitable for linear power supplies at reasonable prices.

If a streamer satisfies your needs, it is hard to argue why you would need anything more.

In Part Two of this series, we'll discuss the Raspberry Pi phenomenon, endpoint streamers, Roon and how to optimize its use, why computer switches and networks can matter, why Wi-Fi can be a sonically superior alternative, and other considerations.

*Header image: the inside of a Denafrips Terminator II DAC.*

# Cassette Multitrack Recorders: the Original DIY Studios in a Box

[Deep Dive](#)

Written by John Seetoo



During the 1960s and 1970s the notion of a personal studio for an artist to record demos or possibly masters of their songs was still an expensive prospect, involving reel-to-reel multitrack recorders, mixing consoles, and other equipment. Artists who recorded at home to fine-tune their material were all famous musicians. Les Paul, Pete Townshend, Paul McCartney, Stevie Wonder, and Todd Rundgren are among the few who decided to play all of the instruments, and engineer and produce records from those home studio efforts during that era.

However, when Bruce Springsteen released his highly acclaimed 1982 solo acoustic record, *Nebraska*, much publicity was made over the fact that Springsteen had recorded it at home on a TASCAM 144 Portastudio cassette 4-track unit with a couple of Shure SM57 microphones. Thus, instant credibility was achieved for a novel invention by TEAC's TASCAM division and an entirely new DIY market was born.

Essentially, the Portastudio used the two left and right channels on each side of a standard audio cassette tape, with its recording head configured to allow for all four tracks to be recorded upon in the same direction (as opposed to flipping over the tape to play both "sides" of cassette on a standard stereo playback machine). With its four VU meters and basic two-band equalization, panning, gain and volume controls all built into a single small desktop unit, the Portastudio 144 made DIY bedroom recording finally available to thousands of musicians, songwriters and producers.

(Although home-use four-track reel to reel tape machines like the classic TEAC 2340, A-3340 and A-3340S had been available since the 1970s, their cost put them out of reach for most musicians.)

Three years after the unit's 1979 debut at AES, TASCAM released the Portastudio 244, which had parametric EQ, DBX noise reduction, varispeed, and simultaneous recording capability on all four tracks.

Portastudios were the ideal songwriting tool for home experimentation or for bands on the road. Cassettes were relatively cheap, easy to store, and delivered good-enough sound to be used for commercial music releases, and to be used in conjunction with more professional recording formats. Rival manufacturers including Fostex, Yamaha, Marantz, Akai and Vesta would soon follow, hot on TASCAM's heels with their own portable multitrack studio-in-a-box offerings.

In 1986, TASCAM released the Portastudio 246, featuring six channels and a higher 3.75 ips (inches per second) tape speed for better sound quality.

TASCAM Portastudio-recorded tracks would subsequently pop up on many singles and albums from artists throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Some of the better-known ones include:

*"Kiss From A Rose"* - Seal

*New York* (various tracks and original demos) - Lou Reed

*Smile From The Streets You Hold* - John Frusciante

*Enter the Wu-Tang (36 Chambers)* - Wu-Tang Clan

Fostex had its own line of compact 4-track cassette recording units that competed with TASCAM. In 1983 Fostex launched the X-15, which was about the size of a hardcover book and pared down the controls to a bare minimum, while still maintaining the primary recording and playback functions required by most users. Its main advantage over the Portastudio was its genuine portability - it also worked on batteries, thus making it an excellent multitrack field recording unit. TASCAM's Porta One, a competing battery-powered unit, would not reach the market until the 1990s.

Apart from their cassette multitrack units, Fostex also created the first 16-track half-inch reel-to-reel deck designed for home studio recording: the B-16. Its popularity was so great that at one point, Ampex had a problem meeting demand for the half-inch-format 456 recording tape that the B-16 used. The B-16 became the cornerstone of Be-Bop Deluxe founder Bill Nelson's home studio in the UK. He used it to record and release some two dozen or more albums.

Yamaha's MT2X, MT50 and other MT Series multitrack cassette recorders competed head-to-head with the Fostex X-15 as battery-powered studio-in-a-box field recorders. However, Yamaha also decided to compete with the desktop form factor Portastudios by offering a mixer designed to work with Yamaha's MT multitrack units: the MG10/2 Series. Sporting RCA jacks for easy connections,

individual effects sends on each channel, and several extra inputs for adding additional sounds on the fly in a mix, the Yamaha MG 10/2 instilled a degree of mixing flexibility that superseded both TASCAM's and Fostex's products at the time.

At the height of the 4-track cassette recording boom, one of the more popular ads at the time for these machines featured the cover of the Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper* album with the caption, "it was recorded on a 4-track machine...and now you can have one too!"

Technology continued to push the envelope in the 1990s, and features like balanced XLR input jacks with phantom power, LED and LCD meters, and higher input channel counts on more expensive models became more prevalent. Also, cheaper models with fewer features, like shelving instead of parametric EQ, and the reduction of four separate input busses to two L/R busses, lowered the entry point for buying a multitrack recorder. With the awareness that MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface) had become the key factor in syncing drum machines and keyboards with digital sequencers, TASCAM released its 644 (4-track) and 688 (8-track) MIDInstudio recorders, which were essentially Portastudios with MIDI routing capability.

TASCAM unveiled its 488, the first 8-track Portastudio, at a time when DAT (Digital Audio Tape) had already hit the market, and digital sampling was becoming popular. Despite squeezing eight tracks onto a cassette at roughly 0.25mm track width per track, the 488 Portastudio specs touted a 40Hz-14 kHz bandwidth and a 90dB S/N ratio with less than 70dB crosstalk. One drawback was that the parametric EQ of the 244 had been replaced by a simpler low- (100 Hz) and high- (10 kHz) 12dB cut/boost configuration. Although there were two effects sends, only one or the other could be engaged in a channel strip, not both.

Acknowledging the need for syncing to MIDI, the 488 had automatic bypass routing to track 8 in order to record a MIDI sync tone.

The biggest drawback of the 488 was its lack of outputs for use with external amps and speakers. It only had a headphone output, which meant that working with other musicians and any kind of serious mixing would require feeding the headphone output into an amplifier via some kind of adapter or outboard unit.

Inevitably, analog cassette-based multitrack recorders would be superseded by digital technology. In 1992 Alesis introduced the first (relatively) compact multitrack digital recorder, the 8-track ADAT, which used the then-new DAT (Digital Audio Tape). Tascam followed in 1993 with its DA-88, which recorded on 8 mm videotape. Companies like Korg, Zoom, Roland and others followed. Analog cassette tapes as a medium were eclipsed by compact multitrack recorders with internal hard disc drives and the ability to record onto recordable CD burners, and later onto SD Cards and flash drives.

Although so much recording today is done using computers running DAW (Digital Audio Workstation) software, many musicians and producers still want the ease of use and workflow of using actual recording machines. While it's true that the flexibility and features of a DAW with plugins are widening the technology and functionality gap compared to standalone compact recorders, the latter still retain a loyal following and now boast vastly superior sound quality and storage capability, in the same-sized packages as their predecessors from 40 years ago. Units such as the TASCAM Portastudio DP-32SD can also connect to a DAW via USB and can seamlessly merge tracks

via direct uploads, or create files that can then be emailed to other musicians for remote collaboration. The compact recorders of today also sport DSP reverb, delay, chorus, compression, distortion, and other effects, that often are quieter than outboard rack-mounted gear.

Perhaps the full-circle irony of the Portastudio saga is that in 2010, TASCAM released an iPad app of the Portastudio 144.

The book isn't closed on those old analog machines. With over one million units sold since 1979, multitrack cassette recorders will likely be around for a long time. Dozens are advertised on eBay and other outlets every day. Artists from Springsteen to Lady Gaga, who received a Portastudio as a gift from her father while in her teens, are fans, and still use them for the creative mojo and inspiration they deliver.

*Header image: Fostex 250 cassette multitrack recorder.*



# The Psychedelic Supermarket

[True-Life Rock Tales](#)

Written by Ken Sander



In [issue 141](#), [Issue 142](#) and [Issue 143](#) Ken wrote about his late 1960s relocation from New York to California. The story continues [here](#).

At this point I was over it. I was getting bored working at the Music Revolution record store. I had been there for about five months and the thrill was gone. Still, it was a job, an easy one at that, and Les, the owner, was not abusive, nor did I have any other significant complaints. The pay wasn't much but it was what you would expect that kind of retail work to pay.

At the Music Revolution I met Lenny, a guy from Brooklyn. He mentioned there was an opportunity to have my own business. There was this headshop called The Gemini Psychedelic Supermarket on Las Palmas just north of Hollywood Blvd. smack dab in the middle of Hollywood's tourist area. The

clothing concession was available. I was semi-interested. He mentioned that he had the poster concession and was doing very well.

Still, I wasn't convinced, and I told him that I would think about it. I kind of forgot about it and Lenny showed up at the Music Revolution a week later. He said, "It is a good situation. There is no buy in, and this is a good opportunity for you to have your own business and make some money." I had questions: there was no lease, and they could raise my rent at any time. If I was doing well, they could even evict me and take over my business. Lenny said those concerns were not an issue; he had done business with them, and their interest was in collecting the rent.

Two brothers, Mel and Gary, had the lease on the building and in turn rented space to the individual concession booths. They had product categories, and they decided what kind of merchandise each store could sell. Their idea was to guarantee that there was no competition within the Supermarket, and also to have control over what was sold. The reason was they wanted to maintain the integrity of the space and keep it "psychedelic" and hip...er, hippie.

The Psychedelic Supermarket was a pretty big space. I met with Mel and Gary in their office there. They seemed greasy and did not inspire confidence or trust. It would be an understatement to say they were an unusual-looking pair. Mel was in his late thirties and a little bit chubby with a permanent five o'clock shadow, a mustache with stringy dark brown hair. Mediterranean Sephardic, North African type.

The other brother, Gary, had contracted polio when he was younger and was totally paralyzed from the waist down and wearing leg braces. For someone who was paralyzed Gary was quite mobile and self-sufficient. He got around on crutches and was unbelievably agile. He could stand and lean on his crutches for long spells, moved at a good clip and could get out of a chair by himself. I never saw Gary need help in any physical way. These brothers worked well together, though Mel seemed to be more of the leader of the two. These were not the type of people one would associate with the word "psychedelic."

They showed me around and explained the setup. We went back to their office, and they confirmed what Lenny told me about selling in my booth. "I don't have any inventory," I said, and Mel replied, "we have enough here to get you started," and he showed me some women's wear and men's bell bottoms. I asked Mel where he got these clothes, and he told me a road salesman for a clothing manufacturer had quit his job and sold Mel his samples.

I checked the samples out and they were pretty nice, good stuff. The prices were not that great but there was enough room to keystone them [keystone means doubling the price]. Then he brought up the rent, and it was \$100 a week, to be paid every two weeks. I thought that was a bit high, but Mel said I would have no trouble making that and that this location was perfect and the foot traffic was good. I could run my business any way I wanted as long as it was clothing, and that I would be open the same hours as the venue hours. Based on Lenny's recommendation and Mel and Gary's promises, I agreed to take over a week from the following Monday.

I gave Les my notice while explaining where I was going and why. He understood, not really happy with having to replace me but nothing personal. I finished out my time at the Music Revolution and got ready to become a retail clothing store entrepreneur.

I settled into the Psychedelic Supermarket. It was becoming one of *the* places in Hollywood to check out. Freaks were always wandering in and it was becoming a tourist stop too. In fact, several different tour buses would stop by each afternoon with tourists.

Lenny's posters were displayed all over the store, even the ceiling. He did a brisk business, selling hundreds of posters daily. He had the most successful booth and I wondered what his rent was. Then there was Michael Foster's head shop that stocked everything from rolling papers to pipes and bongos and roach clips. A full-service paraphernalia shop. There were three other associated booths. The brothers were on site all the time and they were a pain in the ass.

About a month after I started there, Les walked in. He said a friendly hello and then asked me some casual questions about the place. He walked around, checking everything out. I figured he did not just walk in by accident. He obviously had heard a buzz or something about the place and was checking out the concept, and now that I thought about it, that was astute.

The place was becoming a mecca of sorts and attracted young freaks. Mel and Gary had a broken-in rustic older house that was in need of some repair up in the hills. They started inviting some freaks and hippies up after hours to hang out and party. I had no desire to join them, and had not gone before, but on one night, there was this girl. She was very cute, and we were hitting it off and she was wanting to go to the party. I decided to go with her to get to know her better.

There were about twelve of us hanging out in this smallish rundown living room. We were talking and it was getting noisy, so she suggested that we go to the quieter guest room. Getting comfy, we continued to get to know each other. Afterward, we were taking a breather and I noticed a light coming through a hole in the wall. I immediately ran out and caught Mel looking into the room through that hole. "What the f\*ck?" I said to Mel, and he just gave me a slightly embarrassed smile and a shrug and walked back toward the living room. I was annoyed. Mel is worse than sleazy. I probably should have known better, but something like that happening just wasn't on my radar.

I never went back to their house. After that night that gal disappeared, and I never saw her again. That was not unusual; that happened in Hollywood back in those days.

A couple of months later Susan Morse walked in the store, came up to me and we started talking. I told her I had worked at the Music Revolution and now I had the clothing booth here. We walked over to my booth, and she started to look through the clothing rack. After a few minutes she told me she wanted to buy a couple of blouses, but wanted a discount. Nobody had ever asked for a discount before. I said, "I am not sure if I can do that." Then she asked me if I had heard of the show *Hair*, and I had. She told me she was in the show, at the Aquarius Theater not far away on Sunset Blvd. "Aha," I said, and she asked, "if I get you in to see the show, will you give me a discount?" "Okay," I said to her, and she bought the blouses at her newly-discounted price. She told me to meet her at the stage door and she would walk me in. (See my article, "An Outgrowth of *Hair*" in Issue 117 for what happened with Susan and me].

Overall, sales started to head in the wrong direction. The tourists only bought posters and the local

freaks did not have much money. I went down to the Los Angeles garment district to look for new merchandise and for the most part, the minimum purchase requirement was too much for me. I did get to place an order for bell bottom jeans. I had to do it COD, and a minimum order necessitated a full range of sizes. That included some big sizes, and they were going to be a tough sell. That wasn't my customer; everyone was skinny in those days. Small and medium sizes were fine.

The jeans sold well to the local freaks. I priced them fairly and they were good quality, but I was right about the large sizes - they never sold. If and when I had a customer with a 36-inch waist I was pleasantly surprised, but I never did sell any size 38 or 40.

Things were slowing down for all of us, except for sales of Lenny's posters. The tourists couldn't get enough of them. The rest of us only had the local hippies as customers. Mike Foster's head shop would sell rolling papers and roach clips, but there were head shops everywhere.

I was doing OK, sort of, but the place was becoming less of a hangout and more of a tourist attraction. Buying and selling enough inventory was getting harder and harder.

The Gemini Psychedelic Supermarket had peaked. The only way the place could move forward was with new blood [concessions], and that wasn't happening. Mel and Gary couldn't attract new concessioners. They didn't inspire confidence, ya think?

Soon enough, I gave notice. It was mostly a good experience, except for the brothers. I was making a living while running the clothing booth, but the future for that enterprise did not bode well.

Things were changing. Susan Morse went back to New York City to join the Broadway cast of *Hair*. My friend Barry Byrens had just rented a great house at 8929 St. Ives Drive on the border of West Hollywood and Beverly Hills. The house had a wonderful unobstructed view of Los Angeles. From his balcony, which ran the length of the house, you could see downtown LA and then westward all the way out to the ocean.

A new acquaintance named Aaron showed me a short-term rental. It was a small rustic cabin up in Laurel Canyon on Ridpath Drive. Imagine living in the canyons with neighbors like Eric Burdon, John Mayall and Sandy, who was a good neighbor to both Eric and me. People would drop by, and the place was always buzzing.

At this point life is good. I am mellowing out, but nothing ever stays the same, does it?

Header image courtesy of [Pexels.com/Vinicius Maxiel](https://www.pexels.com/photo/vinicius-maxiel/).

# Finding a Place for Bass

## [Speaker Stories](#)

Written by Russ Welton



In our previous article, [“The Audio Butterfly Effect”](#) (issue 143), we looked at some options for the placement of multiple subwoofers to achieve a smoother in-room low-frequency response. In this article we’ll consider what alternatives we can try if we only have one subwoofer, and some more options to experiment with if we can employ two or even four.

When you are planning out your budget for your next high-end speaker purchase, it’s good to think about accommodating part of the outlay for a subwoofer.

Like many if not most audiophiles, you may be thinking that you don’t need a sub if you want to purchase a pair of floorstanding tower speakers with large drivers, reasoning that the money saved in not buying a sub can be better spent in investing in better main loudspeakers. After all, larger speakers with bigger woofers and cabinets which will move more air than smaller bookshelf speakers. Rather than discussing the pros and cons of tower versus bookshelf speakers per se here, let’s instead briefly consider the relative merits of why budgeting for a sub as part of your stereo system (whether using floorstanders or bookshelves) is advantageous. Or to put it another way, why is it disadvantageous to not use a subwoofer?

One of the main limitations of not incorporating a sub is the fact that your stereo speakers are limited in their effectiveness in undermining where standing waves occur in your room. In “The Audio Butterfly Effect,” we looked at strategies for speaker and subwoofer placement that would minimize the effect of standing waves and their resulting areas of bass cancellation and reinforcement (room modes). However, where you locate the main speakers is always a compromise between achieving the best bass response and other desirable aspects such as best stereo imaging and good soundstaging, which is best-achieved when the main stereo speakers are able to work together for that primary purpose rather than take on the job of suppressing nulls or room modes. In

fact, if you succeed in crushing those modes with your main speakers, it's arguable that they will not be properly placed for overall optimum sonic benefit, and are no longer going to represent the mix and panning as intended by the sound engineer.

A second limitation of being reliant on your main speakers for your bass response is that they may not have the ability to produce as much volume as a subwoofer would (especially bookshelf speakers with woofer sizes of 8 inches or smaller).

Thirdly, they may not be able to reproduce the lower bass frequency ranges down to 20 Hz at all.

Utilizing a subwoofer is a bit like playing the ace card to win the hand by playing it at the right time and particularly in the right place. Using a single subwoofer lets the main stereo speakers do the primary job of delivering the stereo image and soundstage, while the subwoofer will provide bass extension and greater dynamics. (Note: though conventional wisdom states that bass is non-directional below around 80 Hz, facilitating the use of a single subwoofer in a "2.1-channel" audio system, some audiophiles insist that stereo subwoofer bass is better.)

OK, so let's say our budget allows us to purchase just one sub. A typical placement option would be to put this single sub in the corner of our room. Corner placement supports bass extension and volume, is physically likely less obtrusive in the room and contributes to a fuller sound when we have correctly set the subwoofer's phase, volume and low-frequency crossover point for proper integration with our main stereo drivers. However, this is not the optimum placement for dealing with standing waves. Corner placement maximally excites room modes, giving the most output but also the most uneven response.

A more effective placement for purely getting rid of the typical standing wave null that occurs in the middle of a rectangular room is to place the sub exactly where the null is occurring. This has the effect of destabilizing the room's reinforcement of the standing wave, and greatly reduces the polarity of the "pulse" or "swing" of the sound pressure variation on either side of the null. This results in more even bass response. It's just that for most of us, placing the sub in the middle of the room is impractical, not aesthetically suitable, or may even be something to trip over, but if you have the opportunity to set it up this way, it can give you a new aural reference.

This is why corner placement often wins out over placing the sub in the middle of the room (or close to/on a null point). If your subwoofer is currently in the corner and you have the ability to try placing it in the middle of the room, you may be surprised at just how much "richness" can be added to your room's bass depth.

If that option leaves you cold because of its aesthetics, you can always try the tried and true "subwoofer crawl" method. Here, you temporarily place your sub in your main seating position, and then, playing some bass-prominent music, crawl around your floor listening for the location where the bass sounds the best. When you have found it, place your sub there. Then when you return to your listening position, the roles are reversed and you will hear better bass. (To try this, you will of course need long-enough speaker wires and power cables for freedom of movement, although you may choose to use a wireless subwoofer system which can reduce some cabling.)

In my own experimentation with this method, combined with a healthy amount of additional trial and error and room measurement, I was surprised at just how good one subwoofer can sound when placed a quarter of the way *into* the room's width and one eighth in from the front wall. This was a good working compromise compared to another suggested alternative of placing the sub a quarter of

the way into the room both in *length and width*. However, the latter method also can work *very well*, again, if such a placement is livable.

Now, let's consider why the use of multiple subwoofers can be so advantageous. Two (or more) subs can produce more even, smoother and in fact louder bass, by reducing the effect of multiple room modes. In many installations, this also gives you the freedom to place the subs in less visually-obtrusive locations and keep your room footprint clearer. More important for some listeners is that optimally integrating multiple subs allows you perhaps as much as a 5 dB gain increase, but without sounding that much louder.

How so? As this well-integrated bass is now producing a more *even* response, it exhibits less-aggressive anomalous peaks and troughs. Due to more dips in the response now being "filled in" by the additional subs, the setup is also now more efficient in the way it is exciting the room. It sounds fuller and therefore richer, deeper and more encompassing than one sub played at the same increased gain level but which would very likely be far less smooth, suffering from an undesirable frequency response dip that you may have tried to compensate for by boosting the volume to "get more bass." Optimized bass is less localized, particularly if you are using a higher crossover frequency (but perhaps less than 100 Hz, when localization can become too evident) and will sound more similar in more listening seats.

Here's a video with some detail on the subject:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O1LyBGeuwZY>

As far as placement options for two subs, placing them in opposite corners of the front wall does a good job of reducing the room's standing waves at their first and third harmonics.

If you have the room to move these subs a quarter of the way into the room's length and width, you'll get the bonus of also reducing the room's third-harmonic null. Doing the same with a third and fourth sub at the rear quarters of the room serves to further dispel the standing wave's second harmonic.

Another advantage of multiple subs is that you can use subwoofers with smaller drivers (and a smaller form factor), which can successfully quash the room modes while still maintaining great bass dynamics and punch, without the need for huge subwoofers in your room. Be aware, though, that there is a tradeoff between output and smoothness. Using two to four subwoofers throughout the room will give you a smoother low-frequency response, but with a similar output level to employing just a single corner-loaded subwoofer.

Header image: SVS [SB-1000 Pro](#) subwoofers, available for purchase as a package of two.

# Stephen Duffy: Flying Beyond Duran Duran With the Hawks and Lilac Time

[Disciples of Sound](#)

Written by Ray Chelstowski



“Rock royalty” is perhaps an overused term these days. But there are those who have applied their creative hand to so many pieces of music over time that it’s impossible to imagine what the modern musical landscape might have looked like without their contributions. Stephen Duffy is one of those artists. First as a founder of Duran Duran, Duffy helped set rock on a course that would lead to a post-punk world filled with remarkable bands and unforgettable songs. Unfortunately, one of the



outfits he led following Duran Duran, The Hawks, came and went almost unnoticed.

With a sensibility birthed in Birmingham, England, The Hawks made music that sat somewhere between The Jam and Echo & The Bunnymen. Their brief 18-month run produced a bunch of demos but no record deal. Duffy and The Hawks, Dave Twist (drums), Dave Kusworth (guitar), Simon Colley (bass), and Paul Adams (guitar) would disband and find success elsewhere. For Duffy, it was first within the world of pop, where he scored a massive international hit with Tin Tin's "Kiss Me," and later developed into a highly regarded man of song with the acoustically driven outfit Lilac Time. Along the way he also collaborated with Robbie Williams and Barenaked Ladies, helping them craft music that would sell millions upon millions of records.

Three years ago Duffy was approached by Kusworth and asked if he would unearth the Hawks' cassette archive Duffy had been holding onto, and use it to build an album. It would be the last time they would speak. Kusworth passed soon after. However, Duffy was true to his word and has undertaken a remarkable journey, turning 40-year-old cassettes that were largely deteriorated into a stunning ten-song collection of head-turning rock tunes.

We had the opportunity to speak with Duffy about the project, the band, and how his music has evolved as the modern music world becomes more and more fascinated with the sounds he and others created in the early eighties. Duffy's career has had so many hallmarks, but when you spin the Hawks' *Obviously 5 Believers*, you can't help but become enraptured in an energy that only a bunch of 19-year-olds who were just unleashed upon the world could possibly create. Their time together was short, but within that window they made music that will reaffirm your belief in the power of rock and roll and make you wonder what other gold Duffy has stowed away in boxes throughout his home.

**Ray Chelstowski:** I have really enjoyed *Obviously 5 Believers*. Can you tell us how this project came about?

**Stephen Duffy:** Because we had never really made a record at that time, I had never gone back and listened to this stuff. But David Twist and David Kusworth had always been talking to me about having a listen to the tapes and maybe releasing a record. Then, the last time that I saw David Kusworth he said it again. Unfortunately it's the last thing he said to me, which gives the project a little more emphasis, I suppose. With David Twist, I had started looking around for video footage. We wanted this to include more than just the music from the forty year old cassettes. We found the footage actually the week before David died, so he never knew that we had started on this.

I've had these cassettes in a box in the back of my studio for some time. I also had a cassette of the first Duran Duran concert in 1979, which became the *Devils* album that we made in 2002. It has made me realize that I have a lot of cassettes that I should be transferring, because who knows what else is back there.

I'm glad that we did it properly, because I never thought that it would get this much attention. I had

thought that people wouldn't be interested in it and if they were, they'd be a bit snooty about it. So it's amazing to me that people are enjoying it.

**RC:** How did you decide on the final track sequencing?

**SD:** There were probably between thirty to forty cassettes. It was a process of finding which cassette and which version hadn't deteriorated the most. [Then] it was a matter of transferring them and then just listening to each one to find what the best version was. In the end it became stuff from the very first recording session and stuff from the very last.

**RC:** What was the general condition of the cassettes?

**SD:** We've all had to bake reel to reel tapes for some time. [*This process restores deteriorating magnetic tape by carefully and literally baking it - Ed.*] This is the first time I've been part of a project where you've had to bake cassettes, and I don't know how they did it. Do you put the whole cassette in the oven or do you take the tape out? I don't know, but I'm now working on a retrospective piece for a Lilac Time album called *Astronauts* which was [recorded] ten years later in 1991. On that project we've had snapping DAT tapes, where you're rewinding a DAT {Digital Audio Tape} and it just breaks. So you have to find someone who can fix the DATs. We've [also] been doing the same thing [in] baking the DATs. So either someone's having me on and no one is baking anything, or there are a lot of people taking apart plastic boxes and baking tape for me. But this must be going on all over, because these retrospective releases are quite popular, aren't they?

**RC:** How do you optimize the sound? And, was there one song you tried to tie everything else to?

**SD:** The first track, "All Of The Sad Young Men," was going to be our single [at the time] and it was one of the first things we recorded. So we knew that it had to be on the record no matter how it sounded. After that, I did go through and chose all of the ones that sounded sonically "OK." I had to stop myself from listening to myself as a vocalist and accept [the tracks that were] the best ensemble performances, and not be distracted [by] a song where I sang very well, [only] to hear that everyone behind me was completely out of time.

**RC:** Why has this period of your career been so overlooked?

**SD:** That's because nobody knew that it had happened. We were so ignored. Nobody was interested. It was that immediate post-punk time and I think that we would have been part of the Echo & the Bunnymen, The Teardrop Explodes, Orange Juice scene. But we were in Birmingham and there wasn't a trendy label or local scene-makers like you would have in Scotland, because Scotland is so far away from London. Or in Liverpool, where the Bunnymen and Teardrop were. And we didn't have a manager to speak of and we weren't very ambitious. We just wanted to play a few gigs. We had very simple ideas of what our future would be.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DvUc56p00Rs>

**RC:** How did you move from this to pop?

**SD:** I had already written "Kiss Me" and we tried to play it in the band and it just wasn't our strongest suit. So after the 18 months that we had been together, around Christmas of 1981 I thought that I would either do an acoustic thing where maybe I could get an indie [record] deal, or pursue the other idea, which was Tin Tin and doing things electronically. So just before Christmas in 1981 I went to a record shop in town and bumped into John Mulligan from Fashion, and they had

just signed to Arista. They had all of these synthesizers and he suggested we do something.

So, we got together after Christmas, I taught him "Kiss Me," and we went in the studio and I had a deal in like four months. I didn't really know anything about electronic music. So as I got into it, it was very much about learning as we went along. It became quite a commercial success, getting to the Top Five of the dance charts.

It was successful but I never really came to terms with it. That was 1982. By the end of 1985 this new version [of the song] would come out and become a big hit in Britain. So, I'm 25 years old. I'm on Top of the Pops with a song I had written when I was 19 and that seems like a lifetime away. I was uncomfortable with it and people could feel that, so I didn't have a very long or illustrious pop career. I decided instead to go back to that Dylan, Nick Drake sort of thing and started Lilac Time. That was 1986 and I've been doing that pretty much ever since.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CRFuzX-44bM>

**RC:** Are you surprised with how many modern acts are mining that '80s pop sound?

**SD:** Yes. The thing about it, especially with that early 1980s electronic sound, I felt that we were trying to make it sound like something, and failing. So when I hear people try to emulate that sound I'm confused, because we weren't trying to make it sound like that. We were trying to make a modern Motown. I find it very funny because you'd struggle with those synths and have crocodile clips and little bits of wire [connecting them] and it was absolutely hellish. It was like some electrical DIY project. The idea that people would try to emulate that sound is kind of insane to me.

**RC:** I really love your album *I Love My Friends*. There you demonstrate with songs like "You Are," "Lovers Beware" and "Seventeen" that you clearly can still write songs that really rock. But you seem to prefer a more intimate acoustic sound.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cTtxPj1dDGE>

**SD:** I've always felt more at home with solo acoustic. Especially at this point where pop music doesn't even sound like music. It doesn't sound like something that's travelled through the air. Even the vocals now sound like an instrument. So the idea of a folk club could possibly be the most avant garde thing you could come up with. Sitting down and playing the acoustic guitar and having people enjoy it is sort of out of this world, isn't it? That's what I love the most. That's what I listen to. That's where I'm comfortable.

**RC:** You have successfully partnered with Robbie Williams and Steve Page of Barenaked Ladies. What do you look for in collaboration?

**SD:** I think that a lot of producers, they have this unused ego. So, they are using whoever they are working with as a platform for themselves. It's not collaboration, where I'm here to help you make a record. How can I be of help? I have never thought that I have needed to slap my brand on anything. For me instead it's about trying to help [artists] be the best of themselves.

I haven't collaborated with anyone since Rob (Williams) which was in the mid- 2000s, and pop has moved on so dramatically since then with streaming. With Rob, I lived with him for like three years to make all of those songs. I lived with Steven for months. You really can't do that anymore, because

back then you'd sell records and if you believed in it, there was always the chance that it was going to pay off in some way. And obviously with Rob, he sold something like eight million records, and the Barenaked Ladies sold around three to four million records. So this was a good way of investing time.

These were good bets, weren't they? Now I'm also 61, so there's no way I'm going to spend months living with someone in their twenties. But back then that was my lifestyle. That was how I lived.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k6aq\\_wSU4S8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k6aq_wSU4S8)

**RC:** How has the creative process evolved the years for you?

**SD:** Well I'm one of those people who have never really recovered from the loss of magnetic tape. I had a little studio at AIR Studios [in London]. It was an office right at the top and if the Pro Tools [computer recordings] were sounding a little too antiseptic I'd open the window so there would be traffic noise, some sort of background, because [when recording using a computer], everything is so clear and precise.

I miss hitting "record" and you have to then perform. All of those hours where you'd be sitting in a room in front of a mic waiting for the red light to come on and [the engineers] are behind the glass saying, "I hope he gets it right!" You'd be there sweating. You can't beat that. Even the mix was a performance. Now you just program everything. Just waiting and wondering if the engineer is going to get the fade right, that sort of thing is what I miss. And of course how collaborative it was.

**RC:** What's next?

**SD:** We are making the next Lilac Time album to come out next year. That's fun because we have had such a long to write and prepare it because of COVID. I didn't want to record it back then because we didn't know when the record shops would reopen or the festivals would start again. So we are recording it now and it will come out next May.

**RC:** Well thank you for bringing this great music to market!

**SD:** I wanted to do it for David and make it sound as good as it possibly can. I'm just so happy people are enjoying the music.

*Header image of Stephen Duffy courtesy of Brian Robinson.*

# What Exactly is Classic Rock? Part Two

[Twisted Systems](#)

Written by Jay Jay French



In [Part One](#) (Issue 143), Jay Jay talked with FM DJ Joe Rock of Long Island's radio station WBAB, and asked the question: just how, exactly, do we define classic rock? One measure: the station plays songs from around 1968 to 20 years ago. Another indicator: while some artists and song choices were obvious - "Stairway to Heaven," "Free Bird" - others were not, including a distinct lack of Beatles songs. The interview concludes [here](#).

**John French:** Did you realize that, going into this conversation, you primarily played songs from 1968 to around 2001?

**Joe Rock:** It was there in my mind, but I never [really] thought of it [in that way].

**JF:** Well you can thank me for that. What are the current Top 10 classic rock artists that you play?

**JR:** Queen, Def Leppard, AC/DC, Van Halen, the Stones, Zeppelin, the Police. Journey. Aerosmith. And Tom Petty.

**JF:** OK. Now, is there a bullseye year where more songs are played from that year than any other?

**JR:** It's as surprising to me as it's going to be to you. 1983. Because we're talking radio format and not the genre [itself].

**JF:** So, in other words, if you were to listen to every song played over a one-week period at WBAB, the majority or the songs that get the most play are from 1983. That's the year that the Police released "Every Breath You Take."

There's this whole big thing about 1971 being the greatest year in the history of rock. I wrote an article for *Goldmine* called "Sunset, Sunrise." Sunset meaning the Beatles ended in 1970. We were all sitting there slitting our wrists. Then 1971 shows up with *Who's Next*, *Every Picture Tells a Story*, *Aqualung*, *Imagine*, Cat Stevens' *Teaser and the Firecat*, Carole King's *Tapestry*; some of the greatest, most iconic albums ever. But to *your* classic rock audience, a majority of the songs played were released in 1983. What artists and albums would be referring to?

**JR:** Def Leppard, *Pyromania*. The Police, *Synchronicity*. ZZ Top released *Eliminator*. Other albums included U2, *War*; Journey, *Frontiers*; Yes, *90125*. Quiet Riot, *Metal Health*, the first heavy-metal album to hit number one. Billy Idol's *Rebel Yell*. Ozzy Osbourne released *Bark at the Moon*. Billy Joel had *An Innocent Man*. Sports from Huey Lewis was a huge hit. *Cuts Like a Knife*, Bryan Adams. Oh, KISS had *Lick It Up*. There you go. *Uh-Huh* by John Mellencamp.

**JF:** By the way, this coincides with the beginning of MTV making a difference, doesn't it?

**JR:** Yes. Oh, absolutely.

**JF:** All right. Let's talk about alternative rock as opposed to classic rock. So, Bowie is...he can be lumped in the alternative category, as well as the straight rock category. What kind of support does Bowie get from your station?

**JR:** We'll not only play stuff from *Let's Dance*, but also "Rebel, Rebel."

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=00rP\\_mlZYx0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=00rP_mlZYx0)

**JF:** But you won't play anything from *The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars*?

**JR:** No.

**JF:** Why would that be? It just doesn't test well?

**JR:** Yeah, that's really it. People hate me when I say this: media is a reflection of the people who consume it. So, if you listen to our station all the time, we're going to play what you tell us you want to hear. We're a business.

**JF:** Would you play [Lou Reed's] "Walk on the Wild Side?"

**JR:** We used to, but it's been a few years.

**JF:** But it seems to me like one of those tracks that people do not object to, do you know what I mean?

**JR:** Until you're sitting in a doctor's office in the waiting room and they have our station on.

**JF:** And you hear that lyric about the woman performing a sex act.

Now, let's talk about the Police. They're really an alternative band, and you don't really play alternative artists in general. Are the Police and U2 the closest you'll play to alternative rock?

**JR:** Yeah, probably. A lot of people saw those bands as new wave, but they were still "rock" enough to be rock.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MbXWrmQW-OE>

**JF:** What about Blondie?

**JR:** I love playing Blondie. I really want to redo that song, "One Way Or Another," punked out with me singing it (*Joe has a band called the Joe Rock All Stars which yours truly occasionally plays with*), just so people can hear how extremely disturbing the lyrics of that song are.

**JF:** Well, "Every Breath You Take" by the Police is pretty freaking creepy, right?

**JR:** Yeah. In an interview Sting once said that people tell him they use it for their wedding song, and he has to look at them twice.

**JF:** What do you think about the controversy of the lyrics to the Stones' "Brown Sugar" at this point?

**JR:** I don't even...

**JF:** Jagger says now he's embarrassed by the lyrics. But "Brown Sugar" does make it onto radio, and the other day I was with somebody, and I said, "listen to the lyrics. 'Gold coast slave ship bound for cotton fields, sold in a market down in New Orleans. Scarred old slaver says he's doing all right. Hear him whip the women just around midnight.'" Jeez...

The Kinks, Dave Clark Five, and the Animals are three of my favorite bands. You don't play any Dave Clark Five, am I correct?

**JR:** Never did. The Animals were on classic rock radio before I worked in it. But only two songs were played, "Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood" and "House of the Rising Sun."

**JF:** Would it be a complete waste of time from a demographic standpoint to play them?

**JR:** Absolutely, because people just don't recognize them. People don't recognize songs like "I'm Bad, I'm Nationwide" from ZZ Top!

**JF:** You don't play "You Really Got Me" by the Kinks, but you play "You Really Got Me" by Van Halen, correct?

**JR:** No, we will play "You Really Got Me" by the Kinks, and that and "Lola" are the only Kinks songs

we'll play.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fTTsY-oz6Go>

**JF:** So you do go back a little further than 1968 on occasion.

Do you like the Dave Clark Five, or are you not familiar with them?

**JR:** I love them, but to me, you listen to them, it's a dated sound.

**JF:** It is said there can never be enough books written about the Beatles. Can it be said there can never be enough Led Zeppelin played on classic rock radio?

**JR:** Yes.

Zeppelin was something I didn't start to really investigate until later in their career, so I'm not as burned out as some other people are on the band, because I wasn't there when the first album came out.

**JF:** All right, let's go through this chronologically. What Zeppelin songs do you play?

**JR:** "Good Times, Bad Times," "Communication Breakdown," "Dazed and Confused" sometimes, "Whole Lotta Love," "Immigrant Song," "Ramble On." "Moby Dick," believe it or not, does make some appearances. "Heartbreaker" with "Living Loving Maid" also comes in and out.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TA9Rec1qAFQ>

**JF:** And of course, you've got the holy grail, the Bible, *Led Zeppelin IV*, where you just put the f\*cking record on and go take a leak, I guess (laughter).

**JR:** It's probably easier to tell you what we don't play [from the album]. "Battle of Evermore," "Four Sticks," "Going to California," "When the Levee Breaks."

We play "Kashmir" and a few others from *Houses of the Holy*.

**JF:** Anything from *The Song Remains the Same*?

**JR:** No.

**JF:** Well, obviously you play a sh\*tload of Zeppelin.

**JR:** There used to be a point in time, not that long ago, when we played a Zeppelin song every hour.

**JF:** Well, back in the days when Top 40 was really Top 40 they played the same 10 songs every hour. If you were number one on WABC, you got played 24 times a day.

Now, I've always loved Queen. I always thought that they were a phenomenal band. But has Queen made some sort of Secretariat move on classic rock radio and just hopped, skipped, and jumped past people? Where do you put Queen these days?



**JR:** Queen just [hit again] all of a sudden, and I think it was before the *Bohemian Rhapsody* movie when people started to realize [again] what a great band they were. We're playing "Bohemian Rhapsody," "You're My Best Friend," "We Will Rock You," "We are the Champions," "Another One Bites the Dust," "Crazy Little Thing Called Love" and "Under Pressure."

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fJ9rUzIMcZQ>

**JF:** Queen, to me, has become like AC/DC. There's a lot of love for Queen, like a lot of love for AC/DC. How much AC/DC do you play?

**JR:** I feel like we play everything, because so many of the songs have a similarity to them.

**JF:** I'm not saying this in a way that's snarky, because I love them to death. They have a formula like the Grateful Dead. They make the same record over and over again, but for some reason, you just go out and buy it. You know what I mean?

[AC/DC singer] Brian Johnson came onstage with us [Twisted Sister] and did "Whole Lotta Rosie," and it was pretty awesome. Brian is a wonderful guy, and him being onstage with us was one of the high points of my life.

In the Southern rock genre, I asked you about the Allman Brothers (in Part One of this interview in Issue 143). The Allman Brothers were the first and arguably the most legendary Southern rock band, and yet you don't play them. When did that stop?

**JR:** Probably [around] 2016.

**JF:** Look, they used to play a month in a row at the Beacon Theater. There're not too many groups that can do that, Joe.

**JR:** But they're not releasing any new music. They're not touring anymore. It's out of sight, out of mind in a lot of ways. When was the last time you pulled out an Allman Brothers album and put it on?

**JF:** Years and years and years ago. But to be fair, you play a lot of Lynyrd Skynyrd. I will say that Skynyrd has more songs that are known, probably, than the Allman Brothers. What other Southern rock do you play?

**JR:** 38 Special. I know Don Barnes from 38 Special well. We (Joe Rock and the All Stars) opened for them a few times. They're really not a Southern rock band. People think of them as one. But they are much more. With the harmonies and everything they do, they are much more [like] a British invasion band that just happens to be from the South.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zg21Rkew874>

**JF:** All right: Judas Priest, Black Sabbath, Ozzy. Tell me about what you play from these three artists.

**JR:** Priest, "You've Got Another Thing Coming," and "Breaking the Law." Sabbath, "Paranoid" and "War Pigs." Nothing from the Dio era. Which kills me because I love Dio in both Sabbath and Rainbow.

**JF:** Who made that great decision?

**JR:** It's popular among a certain group of people, but not among the masses.

**JF:** When Twisted Sister was playing in the bars, we're talking '79, '80, '81, '82, towards the latter part of the Sabbath era, we covered was all Dio Sabbath, no Ozzy Sabbath, none. Nobody wanted to hear it.

Okay. You play how much of Ozzy?

**JR:** A lot. Of course we're playing "Crazy Train." What the heck is the one that he did with Lita Ford? [*"Close My Eyes Forever - Ed.*]

**JF:** Speaking of Lita Ford, let's talk about women on classic rock radio. Where are they?

**JR:** They're in there, but not as much as they should be in my opinion. Joan Jett, Blondie...

**JF:** Janis Joplin?

**JR:** Janis Joplin, no. Heart, yes. Stevie Nicks.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bpNw7jYkbVc&list=OLAK5uy\\_km8xUDsqQmperbBLOmo5xCqRt4X-s2qQc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bpNw7jYkbVc&list=OLAK5uy_km8xUDsqQmperbBLOmo5xCqRt4X-s2qQc)

**JF:** But you won't play the Go-Go's?

**JR:** No. They're pop. And you can't go by who's in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame...

**JF:** If I used that as my parameter, I'd shoot myself.

I also had my issues with the 2019 exhibit at the Met ([Play it Loud: Instruments of Rock and Roll](#)), which I've been respectful about. But I still believe they didn't do enough educating at that exhibit. I think, when you walked in that main hall, they should have had a giant poster of a Les Paul, a giant poster of a Stratocaster, a giant poster of a Telecaster, and it should have said, "While there are many guitars on display here, these three guitars are responsible for 95 percent of every guitar solo you've ever whistled in your head," and given examples of the songs played on those guitars. At least teach somebody something, instead of just throwing red meat out there.

Although, the Beatles didn't play any of those guitars until later in their career, and wrote the greatest rock songs of all time. They couldn't even afford good guitars in the beginning, which is hard to believe.

Where does the Grateful Dead fit into all this?

**JR:** They really don't. They're in a class by themselves. Every now and then we'll play "Touch of Grey," but that's it.

**JF:** So, you don't play "Casey Jones" or "Friend of the Devil?"

**JR:** Nope.

**JF:** And yet, these are great tracks, from the two most accessible albums they made, *Workingman's*

*Dead* and *American Beauty*. They have a massive following, and yet, and yet, you don't really give them much airplay. Any opinion as to why?

**JR:** This is going to sound weird, [but their music is] a niche. It's just a big niche.

**JF:** It's a f\*cking gigantic niche, is what it is. But can you say that AC/DC's a niche?

**JR:** No, because to me, you listen to an AC/DC song, *that's* a rock song. Some people [consider them to be] metal. I don't. They're this band that everybody just loves.

All right. Tell me about the classic rock format, market-to-market, and how much of it is custom-made for the particular market that the station is shooting for.

**JR:** Maybe 15 percent of the programming depends on the market region. The band Head East. Are you even aware of them?

**JF:** No.

**JR:** One of their songs is called "Never Been Any Reason," and in certain places in this country, it gets played on classic rock radio. I don't even get it. Molly Hatchet, who had their big hit, "Flirtin' With Disaster," gets played more in Florida, because they're locals.

**JF:** What about the Beatles as solo artists?

**JR:** You'll hear (John Lennon's) "Imagine." You'll get (Paul McCartney's) "Live and Let Die," and "Maybe I'm Amazed" and "Band on the Run." For George Harrison, "Got My Mind Set on You."

**JF:** Do you think that Nashville, which is becoming more like heavy metal with a twang, could ever fit into the genre? Because today's country is closer to Def Leppard than Hank Williams.

**JR:** I think [country] is going to [always] be its own world, but...there are a lot of rock bands who [tell me], "Hey, you know country's not that bad." I answer, "That's because you're listening to rock."

**JF:** Def Leppard with a cowboy hat! Which isn't the worst thing, you know?

**JR:** I like country. I like Johnny Cash, Dwight Yoakam, Steve Earle. But some of this other stuff...I saw Jason Aldean opening for Lynyrd Skynyrd, and thought he had an acceptable set. But you probably could have put a drum machine on and not changed the beats per minute for the entire show.

**JF:** By the way, just a personal favorite of mine, who never gets played on classic rock, is Dave Edmunds and Rockpile.

**JR:** Love him, love him. I wish classic rock radio played him.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hMjwb13TFCo>

**JF:** Where does Bruce Springsteen exist on classic rock radio these days? You are a gigantic Bruce fan.

**JR:** He's got a few songs that we play, "Glory Days," "Dancing in the Dark" and "Hungry Heart." But

one of the things that's hurting him as far as radio play is the politics of the day.

**JF:** Because he's so anti-Trump?

**JR:** It's not even just so much that; it's just that he's outspoken with politics, and [when that happens], like Roger Waters [as another example], people don't want to talk about the artist anymore [because they get turned off by certain or opposing political views].

**JF:** Does Bon Jovi get hit with that, too, because he's become a political activist?

**JR:** Bon Jovi's music never really reflected that before, but with his latest album, *2020*, it does. So, I've heard from people who were long-time fans, saying, "I'm not so much a fan of the new stuff."

**JF:** You still play a bunch of Bon Jovi, though.

**JR:** I feel like we play the entire *Slippery When Wet* album.

**JF:** What 10 Twisted Sister songs do you guys play right now? Let's see... "I Wanna Rock," "We're Not Gonna Take It," "I Wanna Rock," "We're Not Gonna Take It," "I Wanna Rock..."

**JR:** There you go.

**JF:** We are the most licensed heavy metal band in history right now. Our songs are on more TV shows, commercials, and soundtracks... "I Wanna Rock" was the biggest song in the biggest ad in the Super Bowl of a year or two ago. We just signed a massive deal for "We're Not Gonna Take It" with Rachael Ray's Nutrish dog food. It's their theme song.

**JR:** I love it.

**JF:** I mean, God bless America.

One last thing or two. John Fogerty and Creedence Clearwater Revival. What kind of coverage do they get on classic rock radio?

**JR:** We rarely ever play Creedence. John Fogerty very sparingly will show up. But people absolutely love Fogerty.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3aVSWG0q-G8>

**JF:** I think he's one of our national treasures.

**JR:** He absolutely is, and he's a sweetheart of a guy. And for a guy who's older than the average rock star who's touring, he's got an amazing amount of energy onstage. He can play the whole night and still have a list of hits that he didn't play, even though every song he played was a hit.

**JF:** He's a great, tasty guitar player.

A couple of more questions: Neil Young. Where does he fit into the whole picture?

**JR:** He does not. He's so much more of a folk guy now than anything. His stuff just doesn't have the teeth.

**JF:** Okay, he's moved on. John Mellencamp?

**JR:** Mellencamp's still there absolutely. We play a bunch of his stuff.

**JF:** Okay. Dylan, nowhere to be seen?

**JR:** Every now and then, we play "Knockin' On Heaven's Door," and that is it.

**JF:** If you had a crystal ball: what's the classic rock playlist going to look like in 10 years?

**JR:** Not too different from what it sounds like now. It doesn't seem to really be adding a lot of artists, and they tried to do some of these nineties bands, but nobody cared. Your Pearl Jams, your Nirvanas just didn't hold the audience. Alice in Chains. It just didn't happen.

But what *did* happen is that the movie *School of Rock* came out. It spawned actual schools of rock, where teenage kids are going in and learning AC/DC and Aerosmith and Van Halen songs. There's a renewed interest in that music for teens. So, we're finding teens coming to classic rock radio because we play all these bands that they really love that they perform at the schools of rock. Who would have thought that Jack Black would have had that much effect on music?

**JF:** If the cutoff for classic rock is 2001, which you said earlier in this interview, in 10 years from now, is it still going to be 2001?

**JR:** That's my guess, because I don't see anybody else who's all of a sudden giving us music that we're going to care about. There are brief flashes of bands that are good. Los Lonely Boys put out their first album and it got some attention. We played their first single, and then they never could follow up. There's Greta Van Fleet. I have yet to give them a good listen, but I hear the Zeppelin thing [in their music that] people are talking about. The only other band I've heard about that people are calling a "real rock band" is Dirty Honey. But I don't see the future [of classic rock] in new stuff, just a renewed interest in the music that already exists.

**JF:** And that about sums it all up...thanks, Joe!

*Header image: Queen, courtesy of Wikimedia Commons/ [Eddie](#), [Thomas Steffan](#), Compadre Edua'h and [Carl Lender](#). Compilation by [KPFC](#) based on an idea by [Fronteira](#).*

# Pilgrimage to Sturgis, Part Two

[New Vistas](#)

Written by B. Jan Montana



[Part One of the story](#) appeared in Issue 143.

## Recap

By the time I got my helmet and jacket off, the warlord was standing next to me – a big guy with a commanding presence. He reminded me of Steven Seagal.

“Appreciate what you did man, what’s your name?”

I didn’t think “Jan” would work in an outlaw biker movie, so I called myself “Montana” – the state I’d just crossed.

“Well, let me buy you a beer, Montana?” He swung his hand over my shoulder either in a gesture of friendship, or to eliminate options. This guy didn’t seem the type to tolerate much in the way of options.

I sat down at the bar next to a stunning, leggy blond. “This is my girlfriend,” he said. She looked over at me with a warm smile that could melt Mount. Rushmore. The renegades crowded around us in a semi-circle, leaving no escape route.

“Get Montana whatever he wants!” the warlord bellowed to the bartender. Then he asked how I got Red’s bike running. (In Part One, I encountered Red and his non-starting motorcycle.)

I explained Red’s lack of maintenance and the likelihood that ignoring it further could be dangerous, expensive, and time-consuming.

“I know what you mean man,” he responded, “We’ve been here waiting for hours.” Although I empathized with his sacrifice, I felt my message had fallen on deaf ears.

## **Part Two**

“You know,” he philosophized, “If I couldn’t have a Harley, I’d get a BMW bike like yours.” I guess he was trying to flatter me. I felt like responding, “Yah, and if I didn’t have my Audi Roadster, I’d get an Edsel like yours.” But as discretion is the better part of survival, I ordered a Killian’s Red instead.

The Killian’s just kept coming after that, whether I ordered them or not. Even when I’d had enough, they kept sliding across the bar towards me.

The warlord moved to a table with his lieutenants, but the leggy moll stayed behind to impress me. She didn’t have to say anything to do that. With her china doll face and Barbie proportions, she looked sweet and delicious. I wasn’t surprised when she introduced herself as “Candy.”

They call him Chip, Candy said, because he was once a CHP (California Highway Patrol) officer. She explained that he’d developed an allergy to two-way communication devices, so he’d get on his bike, turn off the CB radio, and spend the rest of the day riding and writing tickets. The department was happy for the income, but unhappy that they could never reach him for emergencies.

Apparently, he got away with this for two years before they asked him to ride on his own time and bike. So he bought an ex-CHP Harley, chopped it, and fell in with this tattoo-and-chains gang. Sometimes, there’s only one degree of separation between the law and the lawless.

He became popular by helping the other renegades beat traffic tickets. When he started organizing rides to exotic locales (anything outside their Zip Code) he was elected Road Captain. Not long after that, he was the presumed leader. No one dared challenge him.

Candy impressed me as a gem in the rough. She was far from stupid, but uneducated. She had

trouble expressing herself for lack of a precise vocabulary, and that seemed to frustrate her. Sometimes she just stopped in mid-sentence, gathering her thoughts. There was a lot of “well, you know,” and “sorta like,” and so on.

She told me a sad tale of a childhood on welfare with a “liberated” mother who was so focused on her rights, she didn’t have time for her responsibilities. So Candy grew up with no constraints or value system and soon drifted into drugs and prostitution.

Her attraction to Chip? “He keeps me out of trouble,” she responded. That was hard to imagine, because he didn’t impress me as the type to avoid confrontation, but I supposed she meant that Chip kept her from spiraling deeper into self-destructive behavior.

Then Chip got up, grabbed his jacket, and walked towards the door. All the renegades immediately did likewise – like a flock of birds changing direction simultaneously. I stayed on the stool, hoping they’d leave without me.

“Let’s go,” Candy said, “We’re leaving.”

“I’ll stay,” I replied, “I’m not ready to ride.”

Candy ran off to Chip, and a few minutes later, he was at my side.

“Hey Montana, you wanna stay, that’s fine with me. But I’d like to buy you dinner and a room for the night. The next town isn’t far.”

Air conditioning, a shower, some more time with Candy, I could live with that, I rationalized.

The ugly school bus rattled to life in a cloud of smoke, just like the choppers. I assumed it was carrying everyone’s gear because there wasn’t any on their bikes other than the odd jacket. Candy threw her long leg over the back of Chip’s bike and as he pulled out, he motioned me to follow in the number two spot directly behind him. I wondered if that would annoy the lieutenants.

The next stretch down the Bighorn Mountains was a beautiful winding road tracing a dry river bed. Chip’s springer forks were some of the longest in the group, with no front brake, so I expected a sedate tour. But he slowly picked up speed as we progressed, and soon, the rest of the group disappeared into the rear view mirrors. He sped up even more, and I wondered if he was testing me. I could see his forks flex like a fly rod as he entered and exited the turns. Chip didn’t relent. It was challenging to keep up on my nimble R90S.

I assumed Candy must have been freaking out! As one corner turned into a 180-degree turn, I envisioned the chopper taking a tangent into the bushes and throwing both riders into the air before stopping in a cloud of dust. I backed off so as not to add to Chip’s pressure to perform, but he skillfully railed the front wheel along the edge of the road’s shoulder. Candy looked back at me grinning from ear to ear.

When we hit the limits of Gillette, Wyoming, Chip and I pulled in to a chain motel, but to my surprise, the rest of the group kept going.

“Hey Montana, you go with Candy to book the rooms!” She got off his bike, then he pulled away to catch up with the rest of the group. At first, I wondered if he’d reneged and expected me to pay for my room, or perhaps several rooms, but Candy paid for the rooms with a credit card. Perhaps Chip felt that I looked more like the respectable citizen needed to fend off the proprietor’s right to refuse service.



She gave me a key and instructed me to unload my bike. Shortly afterwards, she knocked on my door and said, "let's go." She threw her perfect leg over my back seat, wrapped her arms around my waist, and we headed down the road, me wearing full leathers, and she wearing her grade school cut-offs and a sleeveless cleavage snugged into my back.

We passed the ugly school bus, which was gassing up on the right. Across the street, the choppers were lined up in front of a bar. For the next couple of hours, we ate, drank and partied. As the lieutenants warmed up to me, so did the rest of the group.

The driver of the ugly school bus came in with his girlfriend shortly after he gassed up. He was walking awkwardly, with one leg too short which featured a joint that defied human physiology. He had a hard time getting onto the bar stool, but wouldn't let his girlfriend help. Candy explained that he'd been mutilated in a horrible bike crash a few years earlier. So, Chip decided the group needed a gear hauler, and he was its driver. This way, not only was he still able to enjoy the bike trips, he was also fulfilling an important role. I was touched with this expression of empathy.

Chip sat down next to me and we shared battle stories. Like me, he'd grown up on the wrong side of the tracks and understood the mentality of angry young men. He also seemed to understand how to influence and control them.

Somehow, the conversation turned to freeway gridlock. Chip was passionate about it and felt he had the solution. "Turn all diamond lanes into motorcycle-only lanes," he suggested, "Much of the public is attracted to motorcycles; they love the notion of freedom, rapid transit, and easy parking. But they are intimidated by the hostile crazies in cages. Motorcycle-only lanes would do much to mitigate that fear. As an added incentive, all parking lots should have motorcycle-only parking areas adjacent to and equal in size to handicapped parking areas. If only 10 percent of the public could be convinced to switch to riding motorcycles," he continued, "freeway gridlock and parking problems would be a thing of the past."

"This solution is a lot easier on the taxpayers than mass transit," I added; "Besides, most commuters prefer their cars over trains or buses - which is why they are usually empty."

"I never see politicians using public transport," he responded. "If you want sound legislation, politicians should be required to abide by the policies they foist unto the public."

To my surprise, Chip and I had something in common.

The next morning, I sat through an endless breakfast at the local greasy spoon. Renegades strolled in at their leisure with no set plans or deadlines. Just when I thought the last one had finished breakfast and we were ready to roll, another one would stroll in. It was annoying. Riding alone, I'd have 100 miles under my wheels by 10 am.

I was invited to throw my gear into the bus, but preferred to keep it on the bike. It made a comfortable backrest, and was easier to monitor. We stopped every few miles for gas, beers, more gas, more beers, etc. I wasn't allowed to pay for anything. Later in the afternoon, I offered to buy a round. Chip would hear none of it. I didn't feel right about that, and insisted. Chip gave me the evil eye.

Then Candy took me aside and whispered, "We're not paying for any of this Montana, we're using stolen credit cards!"

Great! I thought. Now I'm an accessory to fraud! I had visions of the police busting into the bar,

reading us our rights, and hauling us off to some free accommodations. Who would believe I was duped?

I pondered what to do as I was finishing my beer. These folks had been very nice to me, and I didn't want to hurt their feelings. But I didn't share their lifestyle, and I sure as hell didn't plan to share a cell. I had to find a way to depart gracefully.

When we got to the next bar, the group pulled over again. Good Lord! I'd had enough.

I pulled up next to Chip and hollered, "It's been a real hoot traveling with you guys, Chip, but I prefer to keep on riding. You OK with that?"

"I get it Montana. Go do your thing man. Maybe we'll see you in Sturgis?"

I got off my bike, shook his hand, pecked Candy on the cheek, waved to the other renegades, and I was off, glad I hadn't stashed my gear on the bus so I could make a quick getaway.

*Header image: woman and man on their way to a Black Hills Motorcycle Classic in Sturgis, South Dakota. Courtesy of [sturgismotorcyclerrally.com](http://sturgismotorcyclerrally.com).*

# Creedence Clearwater Revival: Kings of Swamp Rock

[Off the Charts](#)

Written by Anne E. Johnson



They're known for singing about the bayou with a Louisiana twang, but the members of Creedence Clearwater Revival all came from a suburb of San Francisco. But that's showbiz, and these guys sure could put on a show.

As fellow students at their junior high school in El Cerrito, singer/songwriter John Fogerty, drummer Doug Clifford, and bass player Stu Cook formed the Blue Velvets in 1959. Fogerty's older brother, Tom, was already a gigging guitarist and singer himself, and he joined the Blue Velvets as they started to gain traction, getting radio play with a few singles. They signed with Fantasy Records in 1964, where they were forced to rebrand as The Golliwogs, after a racially problematic character in children's books. That move never sat well with the band, and thanks to new ownership at Fantasy in 1968, they were able to adopt the name Creedence Clearwater Revival, inspired both by a beer commercial and a friend's unusual first name. Although it was primarily a jazz label, Fantasy remained CCR's label throughout their short but spectacular run.

By this point, the band was ready to release its first album. During the preceding couple of years, John Fogerty had put in a lot of work to get a handle on a number of instruments, including saxophone and harmonica, which would help establish CCR's distinctive sound. It was also agreed

that he had the best voice, so he became the group's lead singer. To further establish his leadership, he produced their full-length debut, *Creedence Clearwater Revival* (1968).

On the album were several songs by Fogerty, two of which they had previously recorded as the Golliwogs, plus three covers: Dale Hawkins' rockabilly song "Suzie Q," which did well as a single; Wilson Pickett's "Ninety-Nine and a Half Won't Do"; and Screamin' Jay Hawkins' "I Put a Spell on You." The band was proving its facility with these old, blues-based southern styles.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D3o2mAXu3gY>

The most significant difference between the debut album and *Bayou Country* (1969), is that John Fogerty wrote the second record almost entirely by himself. This, along with his always singing lead and producing, was already starting to grate on the other bandmembers. However, there was no arguing that it was commercially the right move. The single "Proud Mary" comes from this album.

The band also solidified its signature "swamp rock" sound - the members' personal backgrounds notwithstanding - on tracks like "Born on the Bayou." That's thanks to the loose, jangly guitar, the sizzling backbeat, the insistent chords in a lazy tempo, Fogerty's rasping voice and drawl, and of course the underlying blues harmony.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l2zc4rSlBQ4>

Another record, *Green River*, followed a few months later, yielding the title single plus the mega-hit "Bad Moon Rising." Fogerty has described how he was getting the hang of writing semi-autobiographical stories, but relocating them to settings not actually connected with his life to give them a fictional feel. A good example is the song "Lodi," which talks from the heart about how tough it is getting a music career off the ground but takes place in a California town that Fogerty had never even visited.

He was also getting more imaginative at integrating his own experiences into made-up characters' adventures. The Johnny Cash-inspired "Cross Tie Walker" is one such narrative. With Cash, that lonesome hobo's tale would have been straight out of his own wanderings, but with Fogerty, it's just a metaphor for more general troubles in his life. The crunching texture and dotted rhythm in the bass bring the genre reference to life.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dr1UNLMKcwM>

Given the short time that CCR was together, fans can be grateful that Fogerty and company were remarkably prolific. *Willy and the Poor Boys* was their third album of 1969. And their quality in no way diminished with their increased quantity. This record included two more rock classics: "Down on the Corner" and "Fortunate Son." It's notable that these two celebrated songs were back-to-back on one single, with the latter as the B-side.

The album's title referred to the original concept: the idea was to tell a collection of stories relating to a fictional jug band called Willy and the Poor Boys. Although the title stuck, the concept fell away during recording sessions, where other themes arose. One was a love of blues legend Lead Belly,

demonstrated in the folk songs “Cotton Fields” and “Midnight Special.” The first of those made CCR a top seller in Mexico. Among the album’s new songs, “Fortunate Son” is one of two anti-Nixon statements. The other is “Effigy,” which closes Side Two.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UcVEcKdMifU>

The band’s popularity just would not budge. *Cosmo’s Factory* (1970) spent nine weeks as the number-one album in the US. From it came the hit singles “Looking Out My Back Door,” “Travelin’ Band,” and “Who’ll Stop the Rain.” The first of these was in part a tribute to Buck Owens (who is mentioned in the lyrics), inventor of the so-called Bakersfield Sound, a style that fused rock rhythm into country music.

For this record, CCR included some R&B, such as their cover of “I Heard It through the Grapevine.” They also dipped their toes into the psychedelic world with “Ramble Tamble.” But even amid the long, winding instrumental solos, there’s still a Southern rock core.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MmjNIJ4YIFI>

*Pendulum* (1970) was the source for another cherished classic single, “Have You Ever Seen the Rain.” This album is all about orchestration: Fogerty played multiple tracks of saxophone, providing a sonic density that doesn’t occur on the earlier records. He and Cook also piled on the piano and Fender Rhodes parts, and all four men played percussion instruments to contribute more texture to the arrangements.

The keyboard and sax lines, as well as vocal harmonization, are particularly interesting on “Sailor’s Lament.” The short, repetitive melody gives the song almost a reggae flavor.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yz-2IaLgZ9I>

CCR’s final album was *Mardi Gras* (1972). There was an uncharacteristic two-year gap after *Pendulum*. Tom Fogerty had quit, and the other three men weren’t getting along, so it was a struggle to decide to get back into the studio to begin with. Once there, they had to adjust to being a trio, and the creative differences flared up worse than ever. They never toured in support of this album but broke up as soon as it was released.

While commercially and critically a flop, the record is a curiosity for giving Cook and Clifford more participation as composers and singers. The song “Tearin’ Up the Country” was written by Clifford and features his voice instead of Fogerty’s. Quite a different sound!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CAAqLnuuKFw>

Tom Fogerty died in 1990. Cook and Clifford continued to work together on various projects, including a CCR touring show, Creedence Clearwater Revisited, although John Fogerty tried to stop them from using that name. As for Fogerty, he became a highly successful solo artist, with hits like “Centerfield” and “The Old Man Down the Road.”

The members of CCR never did recover from their jealousy and legal in-fighting. When they were inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1993, Fogerty would not allow Clifford and Cook onstage to perform with him. So, don't expect a reunion. But the wonderful thing about living in the age of recorded sound is that we will have CCR's music forever, even though the group only lasted for a few years.

# Martin Theophilus of The Museum of Magnetic Sound Recording, Part One

## [Revolutions Per Minute](#)

Written by J.I. Agnew



*Martin Theophilus is the Executive Director of the [Museum of Magnetic Sound Recording \(MOMSR\)](#), a private collection of recording machines, tapes and other materials, along with a companion website. The site contains a wealth of information and photographs of vintage gear. J.I. Agnew interviewed Martin at length, and the first part of the interview is presented here.*

**J.I. Agnew:** When, where and how did you first experience magnetic sound recording and reproduction?

**Martin Theophilus:** Initially I learned about magnetic recording as a ham operator and experimented with one of the inexpensive rim-drive 3-inch reel tape recorders [available at the time]. Then I bought a small generic mono portable from Western Auto in Alpine, Texas.

My first on-location recording job was working for my mom at the Mitre Peak Girl Scout camp outside of Alpine. I strung together enough 12-foot extension cords [to run] 300 feet, to go from their headquarters out to their campsite to record [the girls singing] their songs.

The first serious exposure to magnetic recording was at radio station KVLV in Alpine. David

Forchheimer, a school friend, was a student broadcaster. Under the stage name Bob Young, he became a national DJ and later was *Billboard's* country music programmer of the year.

I would bicycle out with David to the radio station and met the two DJs, Bob Beall and Phil Wayne Evensburger. Over time I went to the station in the evenings by myself and ended up being a gofer, getting news off the teletype and actually being able to work with their Magnecord S-36B [recorder]. Later I noticed KVLB replaced their Magnecord with a Pioneer RT-707.

**JIA:** How did you get involved with tape machines yourself?

**MT:** The Alpine High School band director bought a Sony 300 and I recorded some of the band concerts. Then, for my 1964 graduation, my parents went 50/50 with me to buy a Webcor Squire from the Montgomery Ward catalog. Also in 1964, a band called the Believers played for our high school prom. The manager recorded the dance and I asked for a copy of his tape. The Believers scattered for the summer, but their lead singer Grainger Hunt stayed in Alpine. He came by my house to hear the tape. The Webcor could do sound [on] sound (overdubbing), so Grainger asked if I'd work with him doing harmonies on his new songs. I helped him all summer with recordings and learned a lot in the process. I even was allowed to borrow the high school's Sony 300 so we could make [tape] dupes.

The Believers went to Accurate Sound Corporation in San Angelo Texas, owned by Ron Newdoll. He'd just produced [J. Frank Wilson and] the Cavaliers' Number One song, "Last Kiss." So, I was sure, being a recording engineer, I'd be successful. Ron became a lifelong friend and later moved to California, refurbishing Ampex recorders and building pro duplicating machines.

I majored in music at Sul Ross State University. I began handling most of the music school's recordings using an Ampex 600 [tape recorder] and 620 amp/speaker. Then I bought my own stereo Sony 600. We had a couple of 30-foot telescoping mic stands with Shure 556 and Electro-Voice 665 [mics]. I always believed that since my trumpet playing wasn't that great, they let me stay in school because I brought a recorder to all the performances and tours, and produced an end-of-year album. Fun fact: because I was recording the concerts, I was able to take the college station wagon on the band tours with all the recording gear. So no bus rides; we could stop and eat where we wanted and [had a lot of] freedom. It was fun!

During the 1965 to 1970 period, I formed a recording company in Alpine called Highland Sound Company and built a recording studio into my parents' home by converting two bedrooms. When I [at first] tried to buy my Sony 600, there was no one in the area selling Sony. So I contacted Sony/Superscope and ended up being connected with Fred Tushinsky (later their CEO) who set me up as a distributor with Balco Sound in Lubbock. This not only enabled me to buy the Sony 600 at wholesale, but I was now the Big Bend's area distributor for Ampex, Altec, EV, Garrard, JBL, Shure, Sony and all the other major audio brands.

In my home studio we recorded a weekly Alpine School District radio show, provided remote



recordings for KVLFF radio, produced bands from Texas and Mexico and [did] two movie soundtracks. One was for a freelance movie by Pepper Brown called *Coyote*. The second one was for the photographer Peter Koch, for a film that enabled the Texas Big Thicket to become a national preserve.

My mom, an industrial arts instructor, helped me build a portable console for on-location recording. Turned out it was too heavy and would not fit in my vehicle. It was a great stationary wooden console with custom mixers.

In 1977, I went with Teac, purchasing their A-3340 [four-track deck], A-3300 2T mastering recorder and the Model 2 mixer. Basic, but functional. This and the on-location van [I had bought] really increased my abilities. We produced multiple albums out of that van with recordings in Dallas, Austin, Houston and El Paso. I recorded a big band at Austin's Symphony Square and a country album, "[\*Dan & Dave - Legends In Our Spare Time.\*](#)" It was recorded over a few weeks at the Backroom in Austin using the Teac 80-8 8 track and a Tapco board. I also co-produced the Air Texas radio show, which [once] featured an interview with Stevie Ray Vaughn.

I ended up working for the State of Texas for 25 years, [and] I was either producing media for the State, or working after hours and on weekends recording on location for myself. For a long time I had [the] van and was recording college bands and choirs, church choirs, all styles of bands, and everything in between. I was in Odessa, Texas (in the early 1970s), then El Paso. My goal was always to have a recording studio in Austin, as that's where the music was happening. I finally made it to Austin in 1978. However, the on location recording [income] was not supporting us, so I kept on with the State. For a while I was chief engineer for Austin Custom Records. Many of the on-location jobs I completed in Houston, Dallas, San Antonio and so on were sourced from Roy Poole at Austin Custom Records.

While working for the University of Texas as a media producer from 1997 to 2000, the internet came on. I began looking for information about reel tape recorders, and found none. So I created the website [reel2reeltexas.com](http://reel2reeltexas.com). It's still there; however, I have been combining three web sites into one - reel2Reel Texas.com, The Museum of Magnetic Sound Recording and one other (when time is available...which it's not).

Then came eBay. Around that time, my wife Chris and I were visiting her family farm in Suffolk, England when we came across an Edison cylinder player and decided not to get it. [But then,] from eBay, Chris bought me a beautiful Edison Standard cylinder player for Christmas. Thus the collecting began. I decided to recoup [all] the reel tape recorders with which I'd worked (about 15 to 20 in total).

Chris and I married in 1985. Her work enabled our company, now called Phantom Productions, Inc., to grow, so I could leave State employment. We were managing [a number of] musicians. At a Midem [convention] in Cannes, we signed one of our country artists to Richie Valens' worldwide publisher, the Montie Music Group. They in turn were able to secure a seven-album RCA Custom label record deal with Gene Simmons of KISS. In [getting involved with artist management], I'd sold off all my reel to reel equipment and we were now totally video-equipped to support our musicians. Chris evolved our company into [doing] corporate bookings and was booking 500 events a year. This included Texas musicians, but also Lee Greenwood, Helen Reddy, Lee Ann Womack and many others. She and her partner David Perkoff worked with Apple, Dell, Microsoft and many other corporations.

Through eBay, I acquired the initial 20 reel tape recorders [I wanted to own again]. I began finding unique recorders like the Roberts 1000, which is a 4-track reversing reel to reel with a rotating black and white video head in the middle. It was advertised as [the recorder used] to videotape the moon landing. I found one of the first professional Teacs, still in its original crate. We acquired one of Willie Studer's first Dynavox T-26s.

Then an Ampex 200A came up on eBay and it didn't sell. It was re-listed and I drove to Salinas, CA to purchase it. The 200A was from (record producer and recording engineer) Leo De Gar Kulka's estate. The mother of the engineer who sold the 200A was friends with Kulka's widow. The engineer [had] bought a storage shed of Kulka's recorders for \$10,000. There were Stephens, 3M, Telefunken and much more in the shed. I bought the 200A and asked if he would sell an Ampex 300 in the portable case. He said it would be a lot more than the 200A, so I passed and started to leave. [Then he said, "wait, the 200A and 300 have been together their whole lives, so I'll sell it to you for the same as the 200A." [Now] that's a recording aficionado!

Now [the Museum collection] is hitting 200-plus reel to reel tape recorders. [Also], 100-plus mics, plus mixers and accessories. It important to mention that many tape recorder collections I've seen are [simply] lined up on shelves for display. Almost all our [units] are working recorders, connected to sound systems for demonstration, and surrounded by brand-specific ads and accessories. I strive to regularly exercise the machines (not always successfully) and [do] complete maintenance where necessary. It seems that I can prepare for a tour, check which machines may have a problem, and fix them. Then, one that was working well at test totally fails [in] the presentation. They're just all getting older, like me.

Speaking of tours: we've had classes from many different schools, [with] media folks and then the fun ones, which are [with] engineers that love seeing the machines they knew. I had one Austin TV station request a 20-minute interview. They set up in a rush, then looked around. They left four hours later. I'm not able to go that long as much [as I used to]; however, I thoroughly enjoy sharing our collection.

In setting goals for the collection, these were my priorities: one, preservation of tape recorders that were the first, or early in a manufacturer's line, and [also examples that are] the last in their line; two, were helpful to musicians prior to entering a studio; three, were specifically unique by configuration, electronics, past owner, or other history, and four, in good working order and cosmetically reasonable. I decided we did not have room for professional multitrack machines. A Fostex one-inch 16-track was as high as we went. Again, my passion had been helping musicians develop their songs in the initial stages of creation. So, not many folks could afford the 16-plus track recorders.

As time went on, I continually upgraded as I found better examples of the core collection. For example, I went through five Technics RS-1700s until the one we have now, [which] is "as new." Its perfect dust cover is the seventh one we've owned. This is true of almost all [our] large top-end recorders [like the] Pioneer RT-909, Akai GX-747, ReVox B77 and so on.

**JIA:** How did the idea of the museum begin?

**MT:** The non-profit museum began in 2012 for two reasons. One, I believed [that] with [having] the Ampex 200A, the Studer T-26 and the excellent examples of so many recorders from the period, that I wanted to see them out for folks to enjoy. We were maintaining and still have over 10,000 digital visitors to our web sites per month, with over 1 million hits. Secondly, I was becoming concerned that Chris would be stuck with all this equipment if something happened to me.

We formed the Museum with our long-time attorney (who set up the non-profit), our architect who designed our home/studio/museum and a design for the non-profit museum, a worldwide media sales CEO, and an international business consultant. Our longtime friend Christine Albert, who at the time was the Chair of the GRAMMY Foundation, was a strong supporter. Margaret Koch, now director of the Bullock Texas State History Museum, was a mentor. The Bullock has had our Ampex 200A on display since December 2019. Our museum won a public City of Austin contest for the proposed use of an old power plant building on the Colorado River. The University of Texas Architecture Department professor Tamie Glass' interior design class worked on our museum designs for an entire semester. One of the students, Raquel Torres, won a \$30,000 Angelo Donghia Foundation Senior Student Scholarship in interior design for her MOMSR design. With all this support, we believed our museum would be a success.

One other major museum asset is our documentation of the recording devices, [including] manuals, catalogs (Allied, Lafayette, Olson, RadioShack and others), ads, reviews, posters, accessories and memorabilia. All of this was digitized and loaded to the website. We also received the archives from Joe Tall's daughter. Joe patented the EDITall tape splicing block. Rod Stephens donated John Stephens' recorder information. Dave Boyers, son of John Boyers, who was the last of the founders of Magnecord, not only donated the original PT-6 prototype with its amp, Dave also provided a wealth of Magnecord documentation and advertising examples.

From 2010 to 2012 I'd created and produced seven hours of video documenting our collection. The seven hours were released on a three-DVD set. Dave Boyers bought the set and showed it to his dad. Initially, Magnecord was developing a professional commercial wire recorder, [which] evolved into [their] magnetic reel tape recorders. His dad had Alzheimer's, and when he viewed the segment I produced about Magnecord, Dave said his father was alert and really happy. John Boyers passed away shortly after that.

This brought home that we were losing all these veterans. Folks who, after World War II, created recording companies like Magnecord.

I found that Robert Metzner, founder of Califone A/V products, was in California. Califone produced A/V products that were, and still are, in many schools and institutions around the world. Metzner also founded Roberts Electronics with Robert Craig of Craig Electronics. Roberts provided machines that were more affordable for musicians than Ampex, or even Magnecord. I found Robert Metzner's son Richard in Arizona, and he arranged for Chris and I to interview his dad and mom (Esther) in Beverly Hills. We spent a wonderful day completing an excellent interview with Robert, Esther and Richard.

While Robert Metzner was known for Califone and Roberts Electronics, he'd accomplished so much more. In 1958 Robert and Esther travelled to Japan and solidified his agreement to design and have Akai build tape recorders that he would brand [as] Roberts. Akai agreed to stay out of the North American markets with Akai recorders until 1972. Akai built the recorders using Metzner's designs. Akai shipped their recorders to the US where they were inspected and sent out branded as Roberts. A few years later, the US government made five billion dollars available for educational media. Rheem (the air conditioning company) wanted in on the funds, so they bought out Califone and Roberts Electronics. Richard Metzner said in the interview, "that's when I came home from college and my parents had moved from the LA suburbs to Beverly Hills."

Robert Metzner was not only about tape recorders. In the late 1940's he and his son patented a plan to install metal rods under the streets of LA, and attach magnets to cars so the cars could self-drive. With an airplane fabricator friend, Robert Metzner also built and patented a hybrid car in the mid 1970s. He drove the car to Detroit, but Ford wasn't interested given the gas prices at the time. He resented the fact that the Toyota Prius came out shortly after his hybrid patent expired. His prototype car is currently in the Peterson Automotive Museum in Los Angeles.

*To be continued.*

*Header image: **From left**, Concertone 800 recorder (solid state with tube tone control); 1965 Roberts 400X (the only recorder Robert Metzner had retained in his Beverly Hills home); Teac MB-20 meter bridge on top of Teac Model 1 mixer; Philips N4506 recorder; Teac Model 2 mixer (also used for signal distribution); Crownccorder CTR-5400 5-inch tape recorder/player; Amplicorp Magnemite 610 VU with a Brush head, large flywheel on front, hand crank on right for spring motor, and a battery operated amplifier; below the Magnemite is the Akai GX-77 auto load recorder; Ampex consumer deck AX 300; multiple remotes. **Top center:** Webcor CP2550 "Professional"; below Tapesonic Model 70A; below that is a Concertone 505 (manufactured by Teac and also released as the Teac 505); on right is the Ampex AG 500 recorder with AA-620 amp/speaker (one of two in the room); Teac Model 1 mixer; an Ampex ATR-700 built for Ampex by Teac (same as the Teac A-7300); an Ampex AG-600 (solid state recorder). The Rolling Stone news tape on top has an interview with the Eagles in 1977. Also on top are Sony and Ampex handheld cassette recorders; Ampex AG-600-2 (solid state recorder); and an Ampex F44 Fine Line recorder. Mics are a Shure 516EQ (has built in mini eq switches and is one of a pair); Shure 55; and a matched pair of Ampex HO1390 mics (EV 623s) museum has original mic box and cloth Ampex covers. **On floor stands** are the Turner 99 mic and the EV 640 HiZ mic.*

# Singing His Praises: Bach Cantatas

[Something Old / Something New](#)

Written by Anne E. Johnson



Among the 95 suggestions for improving Catholicism that Martin Luther nailed to the door of a Wittenberg church in 1517 was the radical idea that worshippers should be able to understand the words they hear at Mass. This push to translate the Bible and other sacred texts into regional, living languages had a profound effect on the history of music. J.S. Bach's hundreds of Lutheran cantatas bear witness to the glorious artistry made possible by the switch from Latin to vernacular languages.

Luther used his native German to demonstrate the type of church songs that he imagined could replace Gregorian chant. He also wanted the melodies to be more like folk songs – often his examples *were* folk songs, but with new words – tuneful, repetitive, and easy to remember, unlike the modal, arrhythmic chants, which by the 16th century sounded ancient and bizarre to most people.

During the Baroque period, these simple sacred songs, called Lutheran chorales, became the core ingredient in cantatas, complex polyphonic works for voice and instruments. The chorale tune was used as musical material, and each verse of its German text became the basis of its own movement. Bach was not the first composer to write cantatas, but he perfected them. As an indication of how central his work in this genre is to Bach's overall output, the Bach Werk Verzeichnis (BWV, Bach Work Index) lists his cantatas first.

Conductors who love Bach cannot get enough of this repertoire. Among the notable complete sets of

cantatas released just in the past two decades are John Eliot Gardner leading the Monteverdi Choir, Ton Koopman and the Amsterdam Baroque Choir, Helmut Rilling with the Bach-Kollegium Stuttgart, and Masaaki Suzuki's recording with Bach Collegium Japan. But the geyser of new interpretations keeps on gushing. Here are a few of the more recent releases to consider:

The J.S. Bach-Stiftung (J.S. Bach Foundation) is on Vol. 36 of its complete cantatas series. This Swiss-German foundation, started in 1999, has a goal of recording all of Bach's vocal works, of which the cantatas make up the majority. Foundation co-founder and music director Rudolf Lutz conducts everything, and the performances are recorded live with the foundation's own choir and orchestra and released on its own label. With a mandate of preserving Bach's work and educating the public about it, they post videos of all the performances and accompanying workshops on YouTube so they can be accessed for free. The concerts are also available as streaming audio and CDs.

Cantata BWV 187 "Es wartet alles auf dich" ("They All Wait for You") divides the chorale text into seven movements, a standard format that includes recitatives, arias, and choruses. The J.S. Bach-Stiftung uses a small orchestra and chorus, the size that would have been available to Bach himself, which allows the polyphony and harmonic motion to be transparent. Their performance of the opening chorus is a study in elegant complexity.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aY-AzYJptVQ>

If the J.S. Bach-Stiftung video collection whets your appetite for more live footage, you'll enjoy the All of Bach project being created by the Netherlands Bach Society. As the title suggests, they plan to make videos of every piece Bach wrote, and not only the vocal music. But for now, the cantatas are taking center stage.

BWV 150, *Nach dir, Herr, verlanget mich* (I Long for You, Lord) is thought to be a rather early work, from 1707, when Bach was only 22. It is unusual among his cantatas for two reasons. First, the chorus sings in four of the movements, rather than the usual two. Second, rather than an orchestra, the accompaniment requires only two violins, bassoon, and continuo. The Netherlands Bach Society pares the chorus down as well, using only one person per part. The ensemble is under the capable, well-balanced direction of Shunske Sato.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1C8UErdK\\_XE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1C8UErdK_XE)

In contrast to some ensembles' dedication to completism, the focus for Julia Fredersdorf and the Australian ensemble Van Diemen's Band is more selective. *Bach: Bass Cantatas*, released by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, features the two cantatas written exclusively for bass voice solo, BWV 82, *Ich habe genug* (It Is Enough) and BWV 159, *Ich will den Kreuzstab gerne tragen* (Gladly I Will Bear the Cross). Bass-baritone David Greco fills out the album with bass arias plucked from other Bach cantatas.

Among those extra arias is the opening of BWV 162, *Ach! Ich sehe, itzt, da ich zur Hochzeit gehe* (Ah! I See Now When I Go to the Wedding), which imagines a great wedding banquet as a metaphor for all the good and evil faced by humanity. Lutheran chorale texts, like the Old Testament psalms, were intended to instruct the faithful. While the notes in Greco's longer melismatic runs can sound pinched and indistinct, his voice is generally pleasing, and Fredersdorf leads her period-instrument players in graceful accompaniment.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MF2Q4UXT4ZU>

Besides movements for solo and choral voices, Bach's cantatas often feature short instrumental movements called *sinfonias*. This term was in use long before our modern concept of "symphony" existed, although it is the same word in Italian. Dating back to the early 17<sup>th</sup> century (Monteverdi, for example), *sinfonias* were a standard element of large-scale vocal works, meant to establish or prolong a mood related to the text in the vocal movements.

Cellist and conductor Stefano Veggetti celebrates Bach's skill at these miniatures on the recent CD *Sinfonias from Cantatas*, from Brilliant Classics. Veggetti conducts Ensemble Cordia, a group based in the South Tyrol province Italy whose objective is to investigate the intersection of Germanic and Italianate music. Bach is a perfect example of that cultural crossing point, which Veggetti demonstrates through his choice of *sinfonias* from nine different cantatas. The tight, energetic playing emphasizes the often-forgotten fact that Bach worked at the very end of the Baroque period, when the Italian galant style was already becoming fashionable.

A highlight is Takashi Watanabe's splendidly intricate organ work, as featured on this movement from BWV 188, *Ich habe meine Zuversicht* (I Have Placed My Confidence).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RIHkQeEf5rU>

Bach's cantatas are an endless source of inspiration to musicians. Right now, some ensemble or conductor is dreaming of doing yet another complete set. And it will be worth the effort because there is always something new to explore in this music. Martin Luther would be very pleased.

# The Future of Jazz Clubs: a Crossroads and a Conundrum

[Featured](#)

Written by Stuart Marvin



For some time, many music industry critics and pundits have postulated that jazz is dead. Even the great Wynton Marsalis wrote a song called “The Death of Jazz.” Some of these same pundits, and even a few well-known musicians, have since pivoted, and now say rock is dead. If either musical genre could speak, one could envision a Twain-ian like response that “reports of my death are greatly exaggerated,” though the health of either genre isn’t particularly robust, especially on the jazz side.

Let’s check out some data. According to a 2020 year-end report published by *MRC/Billboard*, R&B/hip-hop has the highest market share of all US audio streams at 31 percent, followed by rock at 16 percent and pop at 13 percent. Jazz and classical are dead last at less than 1 percent each. Jazz enthusiasts stream less, a lot less, but behaviorally they are also far more likely to purchase physical albums than enthusiasts of other music genres. Jazz has the highest composition of physical album sales of any musical genre at 26 percent (vs. 4 percent for R&B/hip-hop). [Click here for a link to an article from \*Music Business Worldwide\*](#) with supporting statistics.

Most streaming services today heavily weigh and promote popular songs to maximize revenue. Catering to smaller musical genres, like jazz or classical, just isn’t an effective or efficient strategy for maximizing subscriber growth, engagement or revenue. As a result, less-popular genres are inherently disadvantaged in today’s streaming world.



Let's look at this from a somewhat different perspective. A zookeeper feeds lions beef because they're carnivores and it's their preferred diet. Beef satiates both the animal's enormous appetite and its nourishment needs. You'd never feed a lion an arugula salad. Similarly, users of streaming services are fed a steady diet of music that they and like-minded enthusiasts will likely consume and enjoy, as determined by a service's algorithms and artificial intelligence (AI). If a listener likes Kanye West, a streaming service isn't gonna suggest Charles Mingus. The entire process is quite linear, with little, if any, crossover between musical genres.

Additionally, an artist only gets credit for a stream if a track is played for 30 seconds or more. Many popular artists, recognizing the importance of a song's initial 30 seconds, try to game the system by making their music particularly appealing in that time frame. The fundamental construct of jazz music is considerably different than pop, which caters to a younger audience that generally has a shorter attention span. In today's streaming paradigm, a slow-build track generally is a no-build track.

Today's streaming services largely program and promote to a mass audience, and R&B/hip-hop is solidly at the forefront of streaming demand. That's not to suggest there aren't legit business opportunities to target smaller musical genres, like jazz. (I believe there are, but more about that later.)

When COVID-19 forced jazz clubs to temporarily close, many relied heavily on the government's Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) for survival. A smaller number also received concessions and lease relief from their landlords. The financial duress ultimately led to a few permanent club closings, with some survivors still on the endangered species list.

New York's Jazz Standard and LA's The Blue Whale permanently closed at the end of 2020, while venerable institutions like the Village Vanguard (NYC) and Birdland (NYC) have struggled with reopening. On the heels of a nine-month performance drought, Birdland, for example, fielded a Go Fund Me campaign to raise \$250,000 to keep their doors open. Many club owners, anticipating the realities of a post-COVID world and a need for patrons' safety, also made sizable investments in ventilation and air filtration upgrades, creating even more pressure on their finances.

A lot of jazz clubs are independently owned and operated businesses, so they lack the deep financial resources of a Live Nation or an AEG. If more and more jazz clubs continue to permanently close, then an important part of the genre's ecosystem (and a large source of artist revenue) will diminish considerably.

So, what's so special about jazz clubs? They deliver a level of connectivity with an artist's onstage performance that's hard to experience at larger venues. They possess intimacy and ambience. The instruments sound brighter, clearer and sharper, plus jazz performances seemingly always have surprisingly rewarding improvisational elements to them, as jazz artists like to stretch out. In my experience (and others'), the clubs generally have stellar sound and acoustics, a prerequisite for jazz artists and the type of music they play. Why else would so many jazz artists release live club recordings?

For many jazz clubs, a large part of their profit comes from food and beverage sales, as the cuisine served is generally more expensive, upscale and of higher quality. I certainly don't go to Madison Square Garden expecting to sample the venue's food, heaven forbid, but dining is a large part of the

entertainment experience at jazz clubs like Dizzy's at Lincoln Center or Jazz Alley in Seattle. Many jazz clubs today deliver both a strong entertainment and culinary experience for their patrons. I've been privileged to see many shows at New York City's Blue Note, the Village Vanguard, Jazz Standard, Iridium, Dizzy's, Smalls Jazz Club, Birdland and Smoke Jazz Club. My favorite club is Dimitriou's Jazz Alley in Seattle. The club has great sound, intimacy and ambience, and they serve a pretty good martini, all in an environment that feels old-worldly. Jazz Alley feels like a 1920s-era club with modern-day accoutrements.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tKPTUijZyBw>

Pre-COVID jazz clubs weren't necessarily flourishing. Many jazz artists will tell you the number of quality clubs across the country has dwindled considerably over the past decade or so. To drive demand, many traditional jazz clubs, such as Yoshi's in Oakland, have expanded their booking strategies to encompass more R&B, soul and pop.

Regarding streaming, over a year ago a UK startup launched a dedicated jazz service called [jazzed](#) (currently only available in the UK). jazzed is a multi-media offering that includes access to over 10 million tracks, curated audio channels, videos, live concerts, documentaries and articles, all dedicated to the jazz genre. The company offers two tiers: an ad-supported free tier and a more robust Jazzed+ tier at £5.99 a month.

So what should jazz clubs consider doing? Well, for starters, they should explore rejiggering their business models. An obvious solution is widening their booking strategies with artists from complementary genres, and to consider booking more longer-term artist residencies, particularly in a COVID world where market-to-market travel is both a health concern and a significant expense for artists.

Another potential growth strategy is to build a digitally-linked network of leading jazz venues across the US, and then jointly launch a dedicated jazz streaming service in conjunction with a Qobuz or a Tidal, for example. The basic premise is that jazz clubs are stronger as a collective than they are individually.

Participating clubs might include The Blue Note in New York, The Green Mill in Chicago, Yoshi's in Oakland, Jazz Alley in Seattle, and many, many more. "Live" shows from participating clubs could be streamed nightly on a rotating basis. As any enthusiast knows, real jazz is best experienced as a live art form.

This new jazz streaming service would include podcasts with leading artists, plus curated programming featuring artists' favorite tracks, all in addition to the jazz libraries already available on Tidal or Qobuz, or whatever platform functions as the services' strategic partners. Each live stream would be in high-quality audio. To drive engagement, set lists could also be curated or augmented using real time chat with subscribers.

Participating clubs and artists would both benefit from the national exposure the service would generate, while a strong e-commerce engine would deliver incremental revenue for artists (e.g., CDs, vinyl and merch sales) from a wider, larger base of jazz enthusiasts. Since many artists work

the jazz circuit nationally, exposure to an artist's performance in one market could drive ticket demand in another, as an artist's tour progressed from city to city.

This new streaming service would utilize a paid subscription model, so there'd be a revenue share with both participating clubs and artists. Some jazz venues already stream shows on their own, and could continue to do so. This service would be additive and complementary to whatever a club is already doing on its own.

Well, that's a snapshot look at a half-baked biz development idea. Feel free to poke some holes; I'm sure you can, but I think you get the concept's basic premise.

In 1997, Apple successfully launched its brilliant "Think Different" ad campaign. That's precisely what today's jazz clubs need to do, think differently. For many, their survival may depend on it.

*Header image: McCoy Tyner at Dimitriou's Jazz Alley, Seattle, Washington, 2012. Courtesy of [Wikimedia Commons/joe Mabel](#).*

# Lyle Mays - Composer, Arranger, Producer and Keyboardist, Part One

[Featured](#)

Written by Rudy Radelic



It's been a year and a half since we lost the brilliant composer, arranger and keyboardist Lyle Mays. While he had avoided the limelight during the last phase of his life, working quietly as a music software manager, his work lives on in the small number of recordings he made under his own name, in his gigs as an arranger, producer and occasional sideman, and as well as being a founding member of the Pat Metheny Group, working with Metheny through the Group's epic final recording, *The Way Up*.

Lyle grew up in poverty in rural Wisconsin, taking piano and guitar lessons from willing instructors who saw his potential. His ability to improvise began almost after he started playing the instruments - he didn't consider it a talent that needed to be learned, as he thought that was the way music was typically performed. Indeed, many of his solos are more like improvised compositions, with thematic development and a specific endpoint in mind.

Lyle first met Pat Metheny at a summer music camp and, when the two attended the same university, the seeds were sown for their musical careers both together and separately. Lyle would play on all of the Pat Metheny Group albums, one of Pat's solo albums (*Secret Story*), a duo recording with Pat (*As Falls Wichita, So Falls Wichita Falls*), and remain a close lifelong friend even after Lyle retreated from the music business.

Lyle was a complex individual, very mathematically and logically inclined. It was reflected in his compositions as well as his other passions in life. He was a lifelong fan of LEGO bricks, and had a room in his home dedicated to some of his creations. Because he liked building with LEGO, he also found success as an amateur architect, having designed a home for his sister. He easily solved Rubik's Cube, and was excellent at games like billiards. It's no surprise that he enjoyed working with computers and software.

Thankfully, towards the end of his life, Lyle was once again interested in recording music. While we will never see an entire final album from Lyle, his final work is the composition "Eberhard," which was released this past Friday, August 27, 2021.

In Part One of our Lyle Mays series, we'll take a look at recordings of his through the decades, including his earliest. Part Two will cover interesting recordings throughout the years that Lyle was involved with in one way or another.

To start, the following is one of the earliest recordings of Lyle Mays' work. The *Lab 75* album by the North Texas State University Lab Band has a couple of noteworthy distinctions. First, it was the first album by this organization that would feature arrangements written by only one person - Lyle Mays. Second, it was the first college/university lab band album to be nominated for a Grammy. Lyle wrote all the arrangements, and penned all but one of the tunes, the oddball being a Chick Corea composition. Lyle is featured on piano, Rhodes and Clavinet on the album. At about the five minute mark in the video below, Lyle is featured on a Rhodes solo.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ko2rpsYxoQg>

While Lyle first recorded with Pat Metheny on his *Watercolors* album, the first time many of us heard Lyle Mays was from the lead-off track of the self-titled 1978 *Pat Metheny Group* album, "San Lorenzo." I chose this tune since the original recording highlights a great solo by Lyle\*. He has said numerous times in interviews that he considers himself more a composer than a jazz musician, and this tune is a great showcase for his style of improvising. (\*YouTube has none of the ECM albums available for streaming so, for the next few videos, I have reverted to using live versions. You can follow along with the Qobuz playlist posted at the end of the article, which features the original ECM recordings.)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hAlyWSAxNZ8>

Three years after the eponymous Pat Metheny Group album, Pat and Lyle went into a studio to record as a duo. The tune "It's For You" on this album marks the first composition Pat and Lyle wrote together, years prior to recording the album. For me, the highlight of this album is "September Fifteenth." During the recording sessions, pianist Bill Evans passed away, and this tune was their tribute/eulogy for Evans. It's quiet, reverent, and lovingly rendered by the duo. Despite Pat's fine work on this piece, it's Lyle's section in the final half of the tune that may perhaps be the standout of his many recordings. Unfortunately, this performance is not available on YouTube, but

here is a live version of the same track. (My Qobuz playlist features the correct version.)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QxK1Mf6\\_yBw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QxK1Mf6_yBw)

“The First Circle,” the title tune from the PMG’s final album with ECM, is an epic moment as well. The tune is mostly in an 11/4 time signature, and Lyle devised the hand claps at the beginning, notable for the mathematical idea behind them. (The handclaps are the inverse of the “pulsing” beat throughout the tune.) The original version appears in the Qobuz playlist, so my placeholder this time is the live version from the Pat Metheny Group album *The Road to You*.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4UOjwowDRQ4>

In 1986, Lyle released his self-titled first album. Perhaps his most revered and beautiful composition appears at its closing: “Close to Home.” It had its roots in a tune he named “Mars.” Of the tunes in his solo catalog, this is the one that may be the most covered. Even Maurice White of Earth, Wind & Fire was enamored of it, and Lyle worked with Maurice to arrange a version of the tune that became an interlude on their *Heritage* album from 1990. Here is Lyle’s version.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cdjPyXWfhNY>

Lyle’s second album *Street Dreams*, from 1988, picks up where his first one left off, progressing his style even further. Highlights include “Possible Straight” which adds a big band to the mix, an echo of his past work with the NTSU One O’Clock Lab Band. The partially-orchestrated “Street Dreams” suite names the album. “August” pays tribute to his grandfather. The following is an easygoing favorite of mine from the album, which is reminiscent of his work with the Pat Metheny Group. Here is “Before You Go.”

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rk-7M\\_rvS9o](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rk-7M_rvS9o)

Lyle’s third album, *Fictionary* (1992), was a total departure from the style of his first two. This one was a straight-ahead jazz date with Marc Johnson on bass and Jack DeJohnette on drums. The tunes are all originals. The album leads off with a fitting tribute to Bill Evans, and goes far afield with a duo of spontaneous “free” jazz tracks. The tune “Hard Eights” sums up the album quite well, allowing plenty of space for all three in the trio to expand.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HUUB5\\_ofkMY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HUUB5_ofkMY)

The following album, *Solo: Improvisations for Expanded Piano* from 2000, is an interesting departure. While one hears influences of both classical and jazz here, it could also pass for ambient or new age. These were sketches that grew into improvised compositions in the studio, Lyle recording the piano to tape as well as MIDI, after which he composed orchestrations that were performed on synthesizers to accompany his improvisations. This is “We Are All Alone” from that album.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uJKhJ2n6zsc>

Finally, here is Lyle's new recording, "Eberhard," which became available this past Friday (August 27) on CD, vinyl, download and streaming. Anyone who is a fan of Lyle's music will enjoy this fascinating new release. If I had to describe the style of "Eberhard," it is a cross between his first two albums (*Lyle Mays* and *Street Dreams*) with touches of the final Pat Metheny Group album, *The Way Up*, and a sprinkling of the ECM Records aesthetic. It is very much a Lyle Mays work melodically, a long-form composition presented in sections.

In addition to Lyle's piano and synthesizers, bassist Steve Rodby produced the track, and a cast of well-known musicians (including Lyle's niece Aubrey Johnson on featured vocals, Bob Sheppard, Bil Frisell, Alex Acuña, Jimmy Johnson, Mitchel Forman and others) take part to create a broad, almost orchestral sound. The tune's composition and arrangement also evokes the tune's honored namesake, bassist Eberhard Weber, and the sound he created on his many ECM Records albums. (The vocals on this track remind me of Weber's *Fluid Rustle* album, and the low-key marimba that opens the tune echoes a melody of sorts that is reminiscent of so many of Weber's unique solos over the years.) Enjoy!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BylqOtOIMdE>

Here is Lyle's [obituary in the Green Bay Press Gazette](#).

A companion Qobuz playlist highlighting most of the music in this Lyle Mays feature can be found here:

<https://open.qobuz.com/playlist/6696534>

# Some Notable Analog Recordings, Part Three

[Featured](#)

Written by Adrian Wu



As I mentioned in my [previous article](#) (Issue 142), I recently installed a new cartridge. Even though it is the exact same model as the cartridge I had used for the previous six years, I still had to go through all the necessary steps to make sure the overhang, alignment, azimuth, tracking force, vertical tracking angle, stylus rake angle and anti-skating were all set properly. To accomplish this, I used a protractor made specifically for my tonearm by the late Wally Malewicz, as well as a set of his set up tools from [wallyanalog.com](http://wallyanalog.com). Although Wally passed away in 2018, his assistant and his son joined forces to continue his legacy. I won't go into the details of these tools, but you can read all about them from turntable setup guru Michael Fremer [by clicking on this Analog Planet article](#).

What I do want to talk about, though, are LPs that can help with the setup process. These come in two varieties; LPs with specific test signals for objective measurements, and demonstration LPs with a variety of music tracks that challenge different aspects of equipment performance. By listening carefully to these tracks, I can pick up problems and deficiencies in my system. For example, if the string tone sounds too strident, it could mean an incorrect vertical tracking angle or inadequate electrical damping at the input of the phono preamp. Problems at the low bass region could mean issues with resonance as a result of mismatched cartridge compliance and tonearm effective mass. It is useful to develop your own step-by-step process that is repeatable, to ensure all the bases are covered.

**Telarc *Omnidisc* (Telarc DG-10073/74)**



This is a two-record set that came onto the market in 1982. Side One has a mirrored surface, with a tracking line with perpendicular parallel lines 5 mm apart on either side. These parallel lines are meant to assist in setting the null points of the stylus (the two points on the record where the stylus will be precisely aligned; without getting too technical, because of tonearm geometry). It also has a scale on the record label that allows the user to measure the overhang of the stylus. This is really too crude to be useful, and you are better off having a specialized tool such as the [Wallytractor](#) or the Acoustical Systems [Smartractor](#).



Side Two has a set of test signals that can prove very useful. It has single channel, in-phase stereo and out-of-phase stereo pink noise. These are good not only for identifying the channels and setting channel balance, but also for measuring crosstalk, and hence proper setup of the cartridge azimuth. It also has a pink noise sweep band, which is useful for quickly identifying any frequency response suck outs or humps in your system and listening room. The tracks of the low-frequency sine wave sweep and pulses are useful for identifying the tonearm/cartridge's resonance frequency.

There is a band with 50 seconds of mixed tones at increasing amplitude, to test tracking and anti-skating. A cartridge should not start mistracking before 30 seconds, and anti-skating should be adjusted so that both channels start to mistrack at the same time. The disc also has a silent band for measuring turntable-generated noise, a 1,000 Hz reference tone for setting reference system playback level, and three minutes of full-band pink noise for measuring frequency response. There is also a full complement of 1/3-octave pink noise from 20 Hz to 20 kHz, which is helpful for system and room equalization, although CDs with these signals are common and more convenient to use.

Side Three is what makes this set famous. It has excerpts from five pieces of music, each repeated four times, each time at a level 2 dB higher than the last. Each excerpt was chosen to test particular aspects of the system, including the notorious digital cannons in Tchaikovsky's *1812 Overture*, which few cartridge/tonerarm combinations will be able to track cleanly (or at all) at +6 dB. The instruction manual lays out clearly what to listen for during these tests.

**TELARC DIGITAL** **OMNIDISC™** DG-10073/74 TWO RECORD SET

**Side 1**  
**TONE ARM / CARTRIDGE MECHANICAL ALIGNMENT DISC**  
 Tone Arms - Pivoted and Tangential Turntable and Tone Arm Levelling Determining the "L" Dimension Cartridge Alignment Tracking and Antiskating Force

**Side 2**  
**TEST SIGNALS**  
 Sonic Verification of Proper Turntable, Tone Arm, and Cartridge Alignment and Operation Complete System Wiring and Phasing Speaker Placement, Room Acoustics and Equalization

**Side 3**  
**TRACKING TESTS**  
 Excerpts from five Telarc records, each excerpt repeated four times at a level 2 decibels higher than the last.

**Side 4**  
**IMAGING AND MUSIC**

**Sides 2, 3 & 4**  
**STROBOSCOPIC BANDS**  
 For use in determining turntable speed accuracy

**Band 1** Pink noise left channel Channel Identification and Separation

**Band 2** Pink noise right channel Channel Identification and Separation

**Band 3** L + R in phase pink noise Balance and Phase Check

**Band 4** L - R (out of phase) pink noise Out of Phase Reference

**Band 5** Left to right panned pink noise Speaker Imaging

**Band 6** Silent band pink noise Speaker and Room Equalization

**Band 7** Absolute phase test Establish System Absolute Phase

**Band 8** Low frequency sine wave sweep Tone Arm, Cartridge, and Room Resonance

**Band 9** Low frequency sine wave pulses Tone Arm, Cartridge, and Room Resonance

**Band 10** Mixed tones Tracking and Antiskating

**Band 11** Silent band System Noise Check

**Band 12** 1000 Hz reference tone Level and Frequency Standards/CX Alignment

**Band 13** Full band pink noise System and Room Frequency Response

**Bands 14-16** 1/3 octave pink noise from 20 kHz - 20 Hz Instrumentation Signals for System and Room Equalization

**Band 1** Beethoven: Symphony No. 5 in C Minor Opus 67/Boston Symphony Orchestra [Telarc DG-10060]

**Band 2** Grit: Corina Barasa Shaw/Atlanta Symphony Orchestra and Chorus [Telarc DG-10066/57]

**Band 3** Tchaikovsky: 1812 Overture Kunze/Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra [Telarc DG-10041]

**Band 4** Chopin: Tarantella in A-Flat Major, Op. 43 Malcolm Frager, Piano [Telarc DG-10042]

**Band 5** Stravinsky: The Rite of Spring Muzet/The Cleveland Orchestra [Telarc DG-10054]

**Band 1** Britten: Fugue from Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra, Op. 34 Leonard Slatkin, conductor and conductor Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra

**Band 2** Good Vibrations (B. Wilson - M. Love) Pops Duo Run Run Don Zirkel - Piano, Organ, Synthesizer, Lead Vocals Steve Barone - Guitar, Background Vocals Steve Demmeck - Guitar, Background Vocals Jim-Jo Rush - Bass Jim Shipley - Drums, Background Vocals Recorded at International Automated Media Studios, Irvine, California on November 10, 1981 Paul Freeman, Producer & Engineer Robert Woods, Co-Producer

Recorded on a 3M 30-track digital tape recorder, mixed-down directly to a 2-track master on Soundstream digital tape recorder.

OMNIDISC™ Manual enclosed - detailed instructions for the use of these discs. Diagrams included.

**CAUTION! PLAYBACK AT HIGH VOLUME COULD DAMAGE EQUIPMENT**

Recording Producer: Robert Woods  
 Recording Engineer: Jack Reiner  
 Production Coordination Assistance: Frank Newkirk, Charles Zureick  
 Art Director: Rex Hochstetler  
 OMNIDISC prepared for Telarc by Richard Duran/Book, engineer  
 International Automated Media  
 Matrix: Rick Goldman  
 Special Thanks to: David Parable, Kurt Reicher, Richard Duran/Book, Charles Zureick, Arthur Steinman

**Soundstream, Inc.**  
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 2381 Commons Park Road • Canandaigua, Ohio 44122 U.S.A.

Side Four has a performance of the fugue from Benjamin Britten's *The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra*. The unique tonal characteristics of each instrument and their placement in the recording space makes a good test for a system's accuracy. The last track is a cover of the Beach Boys' "Good Vibrations," cut at pretty much the maximum dynamic range possible and with deep bass notes to examine the system's bass response. [Editor's Note: I once saw a tonearm/cartridge literally leap off the record when attempting to play this track.]

This is a worthwhile test record to have, as it offers some unique features unavailable elsewhere. The *1812* track always comes in handy if you want to frustrate your audiophile buddies.

### **Hi-Fi News & Record Review Test Record (issued by the magazine, HFN 001)**

This test record was released by the venerable British hi-fi magazine in 1996. This fact alone is rather interesting, since this was at a time when everyone thought the LP was dead. It is a straightforward collection of test tracks, replicating many of the functions of the *Omnidisc*. It has the usual channel identification, balance and phase checking functions. The disc also offers a broadband

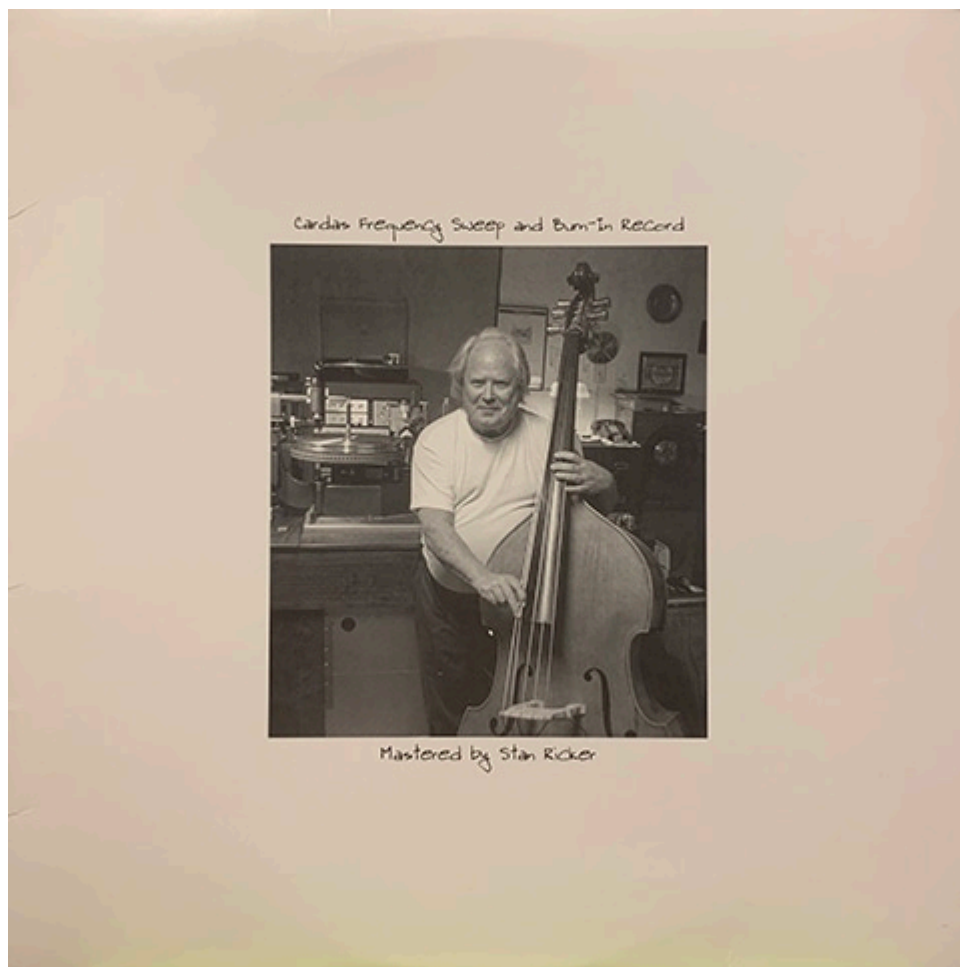
pink noise track for frequency response measurements, a set of tracks at incrementally higher levels for setting anti-skating, and a low-frequency sine wave sweep to measure arm/cartridge resonance.

In addition, the disc has a vertically-cut (hence out of phase) 300 Hz sine wave track for setting cartridge azimuth. You can either set the preamp's output to mono or use a Y connector to sum both channels, and then adjust the cartridge azimuth for minimum output. I use the free REW [Room EQ Wizard](#) software on my MacBook, which has a digital oscilloscope with a function to sum both inputs, together with an external sound card. I also use the real time analyzer function of the REW software to measure frequency response, using the broadband pink noise.

The one unique feature of this LP is the set of torture tracks for testing tracking ability. The tracks are placed at the outer, the middle and the inner parts of the LP to test for consistency of performance across the whole playing surface.

### ***Cardas Frequency Sweep and Burn-In Record (Cardas Audio)***

One side of this LP has a set of in-phase and out-of-phase frequency sweeps that aim to degauss a user's phono cartridge. It also has a set of standard test tones for calibration and level setting. The other side has a set of locked grooves of pink noise that play continuously for system burn-in. The disc also includes a set of polarity tests, to determine whether your system is wired in the correct polarity.



## ***Orchestrations Astromantic* - Tokyo Philharmonic Orchestra/Tadaaki Otaka (RCA RDCE-6)**

During the 1970s, direct to disc recordings were very popular, with the [Sheffield Lab](#) label being the best-known. The D2D recording process presents significant challenges, both to the engineers and the performers. Since the music is recorded directly to the lacquer (rather than to recording tape, to be edited and played back later), there is no opportunity to correct any mistake in either the musical or the technical aspect of the recording. The tonal balance, reverberation, stereo spread and imaging rely solely on judicious placement of the performers and the microphones, as well as the skill of the mixing engineers. The luxury of having a preview head with computerized pitch control while transferring from tape to lacquer is no longer available. The engineer has to monitor the signal levels during the rehearsals and make notes alongside the music score, so that he knows how to adjust the pitch and depth of the groove manually in real time during recording. Any mistake and the lacquer goes into the trash and everybody has to start again. The performers are under pressure to give a perfect performance in one take, and this can lead to a lack of spontaneity and over-cautiousness. These are the reasons why many D2D LPs sound rather flat and uninteresting.

Why go through all this trouble? This is because the advantages of the process outweigh the risks if all goes well. Many recording engineers feel that the fidelity of recording to lacquer is even higher than that of recording to magnetic tape, and the background is quieter without the tape hiss.



RCA Victor in Japan released a series of direct to disc LPs during the late 1970s, mostly of small ensembles and solo instruments. Several of them are astonishingly great. The *Orchestrations*

*Astromantic* LP consists of works played by a full orchestra (the Tokyo Philharmonic conducted by Tadaaki Otaka) in a symphonic hall, and represents the most ambitious D2D recording I know of to date. The pieces chosen are orchestral blockbusters, so taking on this project was not for the faint of heart.

An account of the process, including all the technical details, is printed inside the gatefold cover, and even includes a diagram of the microphone placement. The result is little short of miraculous. Apparently, the peak level on the final cut went all the way up to +14VU, pretty much the limit of the cutting system (a Neumann VMS-70 lathe with an SX-74 cutting head). In fact, during the production of the record, the system cut out on two occasions due to over-current, and they had to start again. The recording has the scale and dynamics of a master tape, but without the hiss. It has the feel of a live performance, in that there are rough edges and small imperfections. Apparently, by the time they got a satisfactory cut, the players were already quite tired, having played the same thing over and over again throughout the day.

Side One is a medley of popular pieces, played through without any break. The program starts with the introduction to Richard Strauss' *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, using a contrabassoon and a double bass to replace the organ at the beginning. The soundstage is wide and deep, with good separation of the instruments. The string tone is sweet, and there is a superb sense of space, an aspect that is so important for acoustic recordings. A guitar solo appears on the third piece, the ever-so-popular *Concierto de Aranjuez* by Joaquin Rodrigo. The plucking of the guitar strings is palpable, as if the soloist is sitting in front of you, and the harmonics are rich and colorful. Apparently, what was released was not the best take for the soloist, as he was very fatigued by this time, but the take was chosen because it has the best orchestral playing. Nevertheless, it is an enjoyable performance.

Side One ends with two themes from *Star Wars*. This version is one of the most dynamic available on LP. The sound is full and the orchestra plays with verve. The massed strings in Princess Leia's theme, which can sound strident in many other recordings, sound lovely here.

The quality is maintained on side Two, although the music is less exciting. The harp and violin solos in "Méditation" from *Thaïs* (by Jules Massenet) are beautifully played.

This LP is not well-known today, and it is not even on *The Absolute Sound* Super LP List, although few of the entries on that list can equal, let alone surpass it. That means you can still pick up a nice copy for a song.

### ***A Journey Into Stereo Sound (Decca SKL4001)***

This Decca LP appeared right at the beginning of the stereo LP era, and was meant to showcase the virtues of their ffs Full Frequency Stereophonic Sound recording process. It is most well-known for the recording of a train, of racing cars zooming round the Goodwood race track, and of dancing feet during a rehearsal. It also has a good selection of music of different genres. The pieces came from the best Decca recordings of the era (which means the best recordings ever), including the famous *España* LP conducted by Ataúlfo Argenta.

A narrator guides the listener throughout the whole LP, giving an introduction to each piece and injecting some (rather British) humor. This LP was released in 1958, and therefore all the recordings were made in the late 1950s (meaning only tube equipment was used!). It is astounding how great

these recordings sound, even when compared to the best recordings of the following 60-plus years. The one complaint I have is the lack of level-matching between tracks. I have to constantly get up and adjust the volume control on my preamp.



The sound effects are quite fun to listen to, and the racetrack cut is a good test for a system's soundstaging and imaging capabilities. The types of cars on the recording should have been mentioned, to test if a system's resolution is good enough for listeners to identify each car. I am sure a motor racing enthusiast will be able to tell a Jaguar D-Type from a Triumph TR3 just by listening. The classical pieces on the record are of legendary status today, such as the Ansermet *The Rite of Spring*, the Solti *Die Walküre* (this came from the 2 LP set of 1958 with the incomparable Kirsten Flagstad. Sir George recorded a highlights disc in 1966, and then the full opera in 1984 for Decca), the Argenta Berlioz *Symphonie Fantastique*, as well as the aforementioned *España*. As an aside, Argenta seems to have a disproportionate number of outstanding recordings on Decca, probably because Spanish music makes great hi-fi showpieces, and Argenta was the leading proponent of it.

It is worth buying this compilation if you don't have the LPs of these classical works. The "popular music" pieces, however, are rather out of fashion now, and remind me of the old BBC black and white TV programs. All in all, I think this is a splendid showcase of early Decca stereo recordings.

### ***Philips Digital & Analogue Recording Demonstrations (Philips 6851 153)***

This Made in Japan LP was released in 1980, and was meant to showcase the then-new digital

recording technology. One side of the LP is devoted to digital recordings, whereas the other side has pure analog tracks. Philips recordings are not particularly sought after for their sound quality, but I have always found them decent. In fact, they tend to do well with string instruments, and I love many of their chamber music records.

Philips made their first digital recording in 1979 using the Sony 1600 two-channel PCM system, recorded onto a U-matic video recorder. Remember, CDs would not be launched for another two years, and there were still no tools for digital mastering. The digital recorder simply replaced the Studer A80 or whatever other analog decks were used at the time, and the tapes would have been edited using videotape editing equipment. I suspect any mastering would have been done in the analog domain.

I had not listened to this LP for a long time, certainly not on my current setup. Originally, I remembered being quite impressed overall by the sound quality, and re-auditioning it only confirms this impression. Starting with the digital side, the sound immediately strikes me as being clean, powerful and dynamic. There is good stereo spread. However, it seems to lack depth and spaciousness. There is just a hint of the sheen I associate with early digital recordings. The pieces were chosen to showcase the strengths of digital, with large scale orchestral and choral pieces such as *Star Wars*, *Pictures at an Exhibition*, the *Beethoven Symphony No. 9* and the *Mahler Symphony No. 8*. All the excerpts are loud. They are meant to be immediately impressive, which reminds me of the old single-sip Pepsi Challenge.



Only when I flipped over to the analog side did I realize the problems. This side starts with Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons*. The violin tone is quite similar to that of the digital pieces, and a tad more aggressive than I like. Ironically, this recording could be mistaken for a digital one. This is followed by Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade*. I never thought this recording, conducted by Kyrill Kondrashin, could be in contention with the famous Reiner on RCA or Mehta on Decca, but this excerpt is superb. The soundstage is huge, with good depth, and the instruments have body. This is what has been lacking on the digital side. The instruments here have a three-dimensionality, whereas on the digital side, they are like cardboard cutouts. I think it all comes down to the ambient cues that are missing from the digital recordings due to the loss of low level information in 16-bit recordings. The dynamics of these pieces are equal if not better than their digital cousins.

The next piece, Alfred Brendel playing Liszt's *Les Jeux D'eau à la Villa D'Este*, has quite a realistic piano sound with superb transient attacks. This is followed by another exceptional excerpt, from Stravinsky's *Firebird* by Sir Colin Davis and the Concertgebouw. It doesn't have quite the dynamics of the Dorati on Mercury, but gets pretty close, which is saying something. The tone is rich and colorful, and the percussion has excellent transients. Next is the *1812 Overture*, with Davis conducting the Boston Symphony, this time with wimpy cannons (especially after hearing the Telarc). The finale is exhilarating.

And you are not let off yet, getting a serving of *The Rite of Spring* with Seiji Ozawa and the Boston Symphony Orchestra. This sounds like a cliché of an audiophile record, but what a trip. The final track is an excerpt from "Greensleeves," played by a Japanese lute player. This is actually my favorite track. The rich overtones of the lute, the decay of the notes creating the natural sonic ambience, and the subtle nuances of expression are all superbly captured.

If the aim of this LP was to proclaim the superiority of digital recording technology, it failed miserably. The analog recordings have handily demonstrated the shortcomings of the then-new digital technology. This is a great analog demonstration record, one that will not cost you more than \$25, and it has ignited my interest in exploring other vintage Philips recordings.



# More SACD Reviews of New Releases

[To Be Determined](#)

Written by Tom Gibbs



# the doobie brothers

## what were once vices are now habits



### **The Doobie Brothers** - *What Were Once Vices Are Now Habits*

I've always had this kind of love/hate relationship with the Mobile Fidelity record label, and that goes all the way back to the very first MoFi LP I ever bought, which was Al Stewart's classic *Year of the Cat*. This was probably in 1977, and don't get me wrong - MoFi's albums were easily among the very best pressings ever produced of any particular title they chose to offer, and in many respects, they were the gold standard of LPs at the time. But I also noticed right out of the gate that they took certain, shall we say, *liberties* with the remastering process; on *Year of the Cat*, for example, there were obvious quick fade-outs on some of the tracks that didn't match the catalog LPs. I noticed that as well on other classic albums, like *Fleetwood Mac*, where there was a really rapid fade-out on "Blue Letter" that almost completely truncated Lindsay Buckingham's great guitar solo at the end of the track. The worst was on Jackson Browne's *The Pretender*, where the *entire second verse* of the title track was omitted - how in God's name do you explain that? I'm still scratching my head over that one!

Regardless, I still bought dozens of the discs, which inexplicably vanished during my first move from the outskirts to the big city in the early eighties. We moved in a single pickup truck, which had my boxes of LPs in the uncovered truck bed; like a complete idiot, I packed all of the most desirable LPs

in the same box, and somebody got really lucky when they grabbed just the right box from the truck during a stop. Live and learn.

When MoFi first tested the waters of SACD back in the early days, I'd just gotten the gig at *Audiophile Audition*, and John Sunier created a direct pipeline of SACDs from them to me. Unfortunately, that didn't last too long, as everybody basically jumped ship from the SACD bandwagon after a few years, including MoFi. But I did figure out, with the dozen or so discs I got from them, that they had refined their mastering process to the point where I couldn't point to any specific grievances I had with any particular titles. And I thought the sound quality was pretty much superb, and definitely on par with their LP offerings. When MoFi re-entered the SACD market a few years ago, I didn't immediately jump in, since I didn't have an SACD player at the time. The Doobie's *What Were Once Vices Are Now Habits* is my first new-production SACD from MoFi. I really just about played my original LP to death back in the day.

The Doobie Brothers appealed to me right out of the gate; being a Southern boy, I had an immense attraction for bands that featured two drummers, like the Allman Brothers Band. I bought this album the day it was released back in 1974; it rarely left my turntable for months afterwards, and I'd frequently hear deeper tracks from the album while listening to the local Atlanta AOR station, 96 Rock. They regularly cranked out tracks like "Eyes of Silver," "Down In The Track," and "Tell Me What You Want (And I'll Give You What You Need)," as well as "Daughters of the Sea," which segued into the instrumental "Flying Cloud." I couldn't get enough of the Side Two opener, Patrick Simmons' "You Just Can't Stop It," with its really funky guitar intro and chorus of "We can make it, we can shake it," all accompanied by the Memphis Horns. The LP was kind of a departure for the Doobie Brothers, who found that following the hugely successful *The Captain And Me* was a very tough act. The first two singles from the album, "Another Park, Another Sunday," and "Eyes of Silver" both stalled on the charts, and *What Were Once Vices Are Now Habits* was beginning to be viewed as a commercial flop just months after its release.

That was, until a DJ at an easy listening station in the Roanoke, Virginia area flipped over the 45 of "Another Park, Another Sunday" and played the B-Side, "Black Water." Suddenly, the phone lines lit up, the song soon rose to Number One on the station's request line, and "Black Water" started very quickly gaining traction on the national scene. Rising to the Number One position on *Billboard's* Hot 100, it was the band's very first Number One song. Only months later, *What Were Once Vices Are Now Habits* had gone double platinum, vaulting it to the Number 4 position on *Billboard's* Album charts. Ted Templeman, the album's producer, has said that he just didn't see "Black Water" as a single - it just didn't strike him as having that kind of appeal, especially the a cappella section near the song's center - which has gone on to become a kind of sing-along sensation ever since.

Mobile Fidelity's SACD surpasses my original LP pressing in every conceivable way, which sounds range-restricted in comparison. And that's especially true with playback of my DSD rip via the I<sup>2</sup>S connection between my Euphony streaming setup and my PS Audio DAC; the percussion intro to "Black Water" has the kind of delicacy and realism that gives new meaning to the term *ear candy*. And the a cappella section - just wow! The SACD is more dynamic than the LP; this is truly a remarkably good disc that really takes me back and has renewed my enthusiasm for MoFi. I ordered four more discs after hearing this one, and the [Import CDs](#) website I frequent usually has the MoFi titles for several dollars less than the competition. Very highly recommended!

Mobile Fidelity, SACD



### **Patricia Barber - *Clique***

I've been a fan of Patricia Barber's for a couple of decades now; I reviewed the "Unmastered" SACD version of her classic *Cafe Blue* album [here](#) in *Copper* Issue 142. That reissue is a technological and musical tour de force - be sure and check it out if you haven't already. You won't be disappointed. One of my favorite Patricia Barber albums is 2000's *Nightclub*, which features a really eclectic mix of PB's unique take on classic songs from Tin Pan Alley, the Great American Songbook and elsewhere. I frequently use the album for evaluation of new equipment in my system - it's really that good.

So, being basically a big-time fanboy, imagine my surprise when Patricia Barber's publicist contacted me out of the blue in May for the opportunity to review her new release, *Clique*. And in the format of my choice - which included the super-high resolution 32-bit DXD format. I jumped at the chance! Of course, I never stopped to think for a moment whether my system was even capable of playing DXD files, but never being one to let small details like incompatibility cloud my enthusiasm, I dove in and started downloading the massive 11 GB file. Which proved to be quite the chore; I ended up downloading each song individually after the zipped file crapped out repeatedly. Anywho, once I had the files loaded onto my music server and had massaged the metadata, I

immediately ran downstairs to try playing the files, which played without a hitch. Until I noticed that the display on my PS Audio GainCell DAC showed no information for the file – everything sounded pretty great, but I had no way of verifying that I was getting full-resolution playback.

I contacted PS Audio, who told me that via a USB connection, the maximum resolution I'd be able to get was 24 bits, but that 32-bit resolution was capable via the DAC's I<sup>2</sup>S input. I ended up ordering a Douk Audio U2 Pro USB digital interface for \$56 from Amazon; you can read about that great experience [here](#) in *Copper* Issue 141. Anyway, in a matter of a couple of weeks, I was getting bit-perfect, 32-bit playback with my GainCell DAC, and let me tell you this: Patricia Barber's *Clique* is without a doubt the finest-sounding digital music file in my library of over 3,000 albums.

Recorded at the same sessions as her 2019 album *Higher*, *Clique* is Patricia Barber's twelfth studio album. It finds her again visiting a mix of jazz standards along with songs that have become *de facto* standards over the decades. Most of the tunes here have served as encores in her live performances; her current trio has been together for over ten years, and the players know these songs exceptionally well. *Clique* features Patricia Barber on piano and vocals, Patrick Mulcahy on bass, and John Deitemyer on drums; a couple of tunes add appearances by Neal Alger on acoustic guitar and Jim Gailloreto on tenor saxophone. *Clique* is her first record since *Nightclub* that consists entirely of covers (well, mostly!).

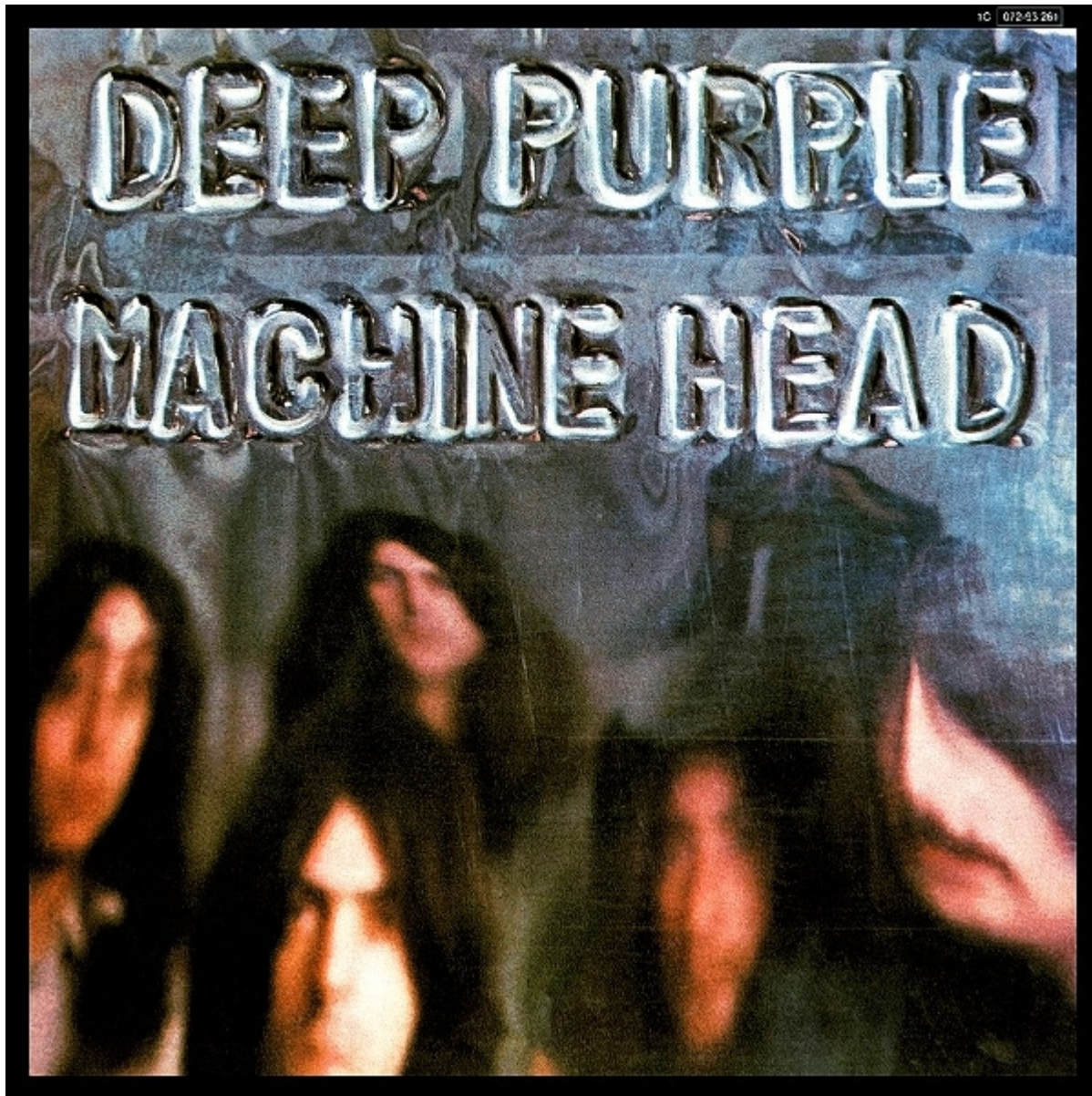
*Clique's* nine songs cover a broader range than those found on *Nightclub*, which holds much closer to the jazz standards mantle. The album opens with a great acoustic bass intro from Patrick Mulcahy on Lee Hazlewood's "This Town," which Frank Sinatra covered back in 1967. With a confident vocal, Barber proves that she owns this tune, without all the unnecessary orchestral bombast that propped up Ol' Blue Eyes. For PB, Chicago has been "the make or break you town," and producer Jim Anderson's microphone placement for Mulcahy's bass here is absolute perfection. You really feel the "woodiness" of the bass, a quality that's severely lacking on so many of today's jazz recordings. Alec Wilder's "Trouble Is A Man" was originally popularized by Sarah Vaughan's 1947 recording; Barber's rendition moves closer to the dark side. I'm talking serious man trouble! John Deitemyer's cymbal and brush work on this song absolutely shimmers; Jim Anderson's microphone placement again offers a clinic in perfectly capturing every nuance of both the performers and the studio's acoustic.

"Mashup" is the only Barber original here, and the first of two instrumentals found on *Clique*. It's an eight-minute trio romp that's an homage to jazz trios of days gone by, but don't expect any tinkling cocktails in the background – PB's trio outings are more firmly rooted in the post-bop era. Jobim's classic "Samba de Uma Nota Só (One Note Samba)" is given a subdued performance; guitarist Neal Alger provides a perfectly-played bossa nova solo that adds authenticity to the tune. Barber's takes on two Broadway numbers, Lerner and Loewe's "I Could Have Danced All Night" (from *My Fair Lady*) and Rodgers and Hammerstein's "Shall We Dance?" (from *The King and I*) stand in absolute, utter contrast to the more jaunty originals. Jim Gailloreto adds a tenor sax solo to the latter, and Barber's vocal approach on each is definitely less sunny than the originals.

Billy Page's "The In Crowd" is a duo between Barber and Mulcahy; this slightly murkier version of the classic tune seems more focused on Chicago's shadowy nightlife. Thelonious Monk's classic "Straight, No Chaser" is the album's second instrumental, and everyone gets plenty of room to stretch out. While drummer Deitemyer's work on *Clique* has been to mostly provide texture, here he pounds the drums like there's no tomorrow, while Mulcahy solos furiously. PB's work at the keyboard is filled with the kind of abundant eccentricities that would definitely get Monk's approval. *Clique* closes with a poignant rendering of Stevie Wonder's classic "All In Love Is Fair"; the obvious emotion in Barber's voice makes it clear that she's no stranger to heartbreak. Barber's opening piano solo is achingly beautiful; the overall brilliance of Jim Anderson's recording here is maybe the album's finest moment.

*Clique* is an exceptional recording, one of those rare events where all elements of the creative process combine to yield a record of perfect performances and technical brilliance. The SACD disc showed up a few weeks into the process, and as great as the DXD files are, my rip of the SACD isn't very far behind. *Clique* is a truly outstanding listening experience. Very highly recommended!

Impex Records, SACD; also available as MQA CD; DXD (32-bit/352.8 kHz) digital download; and hi-res streaming (24-bit/96 kHz) on Tidal and Qobuz.



### **Deep Purple - *Machine Head***

Not much needs to be said about this classic title: along with Black Sabbath, Deep Purple's *Machine Head* helped herald the entry of metal into the lexicon of rock music. I'm aware of the existence of three SACD versions of *Machine Head*; one that was originally released by Warner in 2001, one from SHM in Japan, and this one, which comes from Warner/Rhino Japan. I had the Warner SACD at the time of its release, but living in a household where my kids have very liberally borrowed from my collection (and generally never asking to do so), things disappear from time to time. That appears to

be the case with that *Machine Head* SACD, which was a hybrid and would play in a standard CD player. Unfortunately, I don't have either of the others to compare to, so my remarks are solely about the current version.

A while back I covered a 2012 CD remastering that I felt was a revelation compared to the standard catalog issue; that reissue CD was remastered by John Astley at Universal, but the enclosed booklet has zero information regarding the remastering process. The current Warner/Rhino SACD booklet has extensive details about the production process. And from what I've been able to glean from online info about the 2001 SACD release, this one appears to be identical to it - the more I look at the booklet and information, the more I'm convinced they're the same. In fact, it's the only non-classical SACD I've bought recently that actually contains a multichannel surround layer (I'm not currently set up for surround sound, so no report on that aspect). Considering everything, I'm pretty certain this one is a repress of the 2001 release. So how does it sound?

My rip of the SACD via my PS Audio DAC sounds superb. It seems to offer more of everything that I felt made the 2012 Universal CD such an improvement over the catalog issue. *Machine Head* has never been an audiophile-quality album, but the level of realism here is off the charts good. And you get that impression right out of the gate from the very first notes of "Highway Star." It's like the band is actually in your listening environment, and this Warner/Rhino SACD is really dynamic. I always felt the bass on the original album was somewhat anemic, but the SACD seems to achieve a better overall sonic balance with tons of firmer, deeper bass. Even when listening at reference levels (read, LOUD!) there's only a very small amount of tape hiss present, but that's mostly only noticeable on the intro to "Smoke On The Water." The overall effect of hearing this SACD is like listening to a really great LP pressing - one that offers warmth, greatly improved spatial presence, and spectacular imaging. On the album's centerpiece, "Lazy," Ian Paice's drums just bash through the center of the soundstage - I've heard this album literally a thousand times, but it's never, ever sounded this great. Highly recommended.

Warner/Rhino Japan, Japanese Import SACD

The Church



starfish

### **The Church** - *Starfish*

The Church was one of my favorite bands from the Eighties, and their breakthrough album, 1988's *Starfish*, is definitely one of the records that defines the decade. And maybe one of the best in the band's entire catalog. But if you look into the backstory surrounding the album, there was tons of drama during the recording process. It's a wonder it ever got released.

The members of the band didn't particularly get along with the album's producer, Waddy Wachtel, who had been chosen for the project by Arista, their record company. And Wachtel didn't seem to share the band's vision for the new record. Bassist and lead vocalist Steve Kilbey, who was the band's creative driving force, wasn't very happy with the direction the sessions were heading in, feeling the band's sound had become somewhat *homogenized* under Wachtel. Regardless, upon release, *Starfish* leaped onto the charts, eventually reaching Gold Record sales status on the strength of the single "Under The Milky Way," which reached Number 24 on *Billboard's* Hot 100, as well as landing at Number 2 on the Mainstream Rock Tracks chart. This success helped the band to attain the significant exposure that had previously eluded them both in the US and worldwide.

*Starfish* was mastered for Intervention Records Direct to DSD from the original analog tapes by



Ryan K. Smith at Sterling Sound, and the SACD includes eight bonus tracks from the original sessions. Fans of this album will be blown away by the added clarity and dynamics of the new transfer; this is one of the best SACD rips in my collection. The bonus tracks are all really great, making you think this album could easily have been originally released as a double LP/CD. The Intervention SACD sounds impressively better than my CD in every way possible; along with the stunning improvement in dynamics, Steve Kilbey's bass is much more taut and deep, and the album displays a soundstage depth and width that's eerily realistic.

Despite all the studio drama, the band eventually embraced the music, and many of the songs went on to become part of their regular concert set lists. Despite the unprecedented level of success The Church achieved with *Starfish*, all was not completely well with the band. Steve Kilbey had developed a deepening heroin addiction; I read an online interview with him a couple of years ago where he stated that he'd probably spent over a million dollars on heroin over the couple of decades he was addicted! And drummer Richard Ploog had reportedly dropped so much acid that he could barely function onstage or in the studio. He'd hang around for one more album.

Still, *Starfish* marks a high water mark in the band's career; it's easily the most even mix of songs on any of their albums, and the SACD is well worth checking out. It comes very highly recommended!

Intervention Records, SACD

*Header image of Patricia Barber courtesy of the artist/Jimmy Katz.*

# Nanci Griffith: Sometimes a Rare Music

## [Sitting In](#)

Written by Michael Walker



A master of songcraft is silent now, passing on Friday, August 13, 2021.

Nanci Griffith, singer, songwriter and proponent of "folkabilly": her unique combination of folk and country is gone at 68.

Griffith was born in Seguin, Texas On July 6, 1953. Griffith's high school boyfriend, John, died in a motorcycle accident after taking her to the senior prom, and subsequently became the muse of many of her songs.

Her first recording, *There's a Light Beyond These Woods*, was recorded in 1978 for B.F. Deal Records in Austin, TX.

Louis Black of *The Austin Chronicle* wrote, "Nanci Griffith's songs have always taken me back to those places. Reminded me how light shone through warped kitchen windows, how snow-covered mornings smelled, how a partner looked moving through the house. Griffith's songs develop like Polaroids of lost moments, often of almost mundane subjects - not great passion, but the way the bathtub tilted or heading outdoors to bring in oranges for juice. Photos I'd thought were long lost. Griffith's songs made me realize those snapshots will always be with me in some way."

Griffith won a Grammy Award in 1994 for her *Other Voices, Other Rooms* album. She recorded songs written by the artists that influenced her most, including Kate Wolf, Bob Dylan, John Prine, Janis Ian, Tom Paxton and Townes Van Zandt among others. The title was borne from Truman

Capote's book about the terror of abandonment, the misery of loneliness and the yearning to be loved.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hMkwwytY31g>

Nanci first recorded Julie Gold's "From a Distance," which I prefer to Bette Midler's hit version.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JqIlhCsUTNs&t=0s>

Later in her career she kept playing while battling breast cancer in 1996, thyroid cancer in 1998, and a painful case of Dupuytren's contracture, an abnormal thickening of the skin on the hand, which severely limited the mobility of her fingers.

The Americana Music Association gave Nanci a Lifetime American Trailblazer Award, in a ceremony held in the historic Ryman Auditorium in 2008. Sadly, on June 25, 2019, *The New York Times* listed Nanci Griffith among the numerous artists whose original recordings were destroyed in the Universal Studios fire in 2008.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aTA1llqTmdk>

Nancy is a bridge from our musical heritage to all those who inherit her legacy for an inspired future to come.

### **"In Our Woods, Sometimes a Rare Music"**

Every spring  
I hear the thrush singing  
in the glowing woods  
he is only passing through.  
His voice is deep,  
then he lifts it until it seems  
to fall from the sky.  
I am thrilled.  
I am grateful.

Then, by the end of morning,  
he's gone, nothing but silence  
out of the tree  
where he rested for a night.  
And this I find acceptable.  
Not enough is a poor life.  
But too much is, well, too much.  
Imagine Verdi or Mahler  
every day, all day.  
It would exhaust anyone.

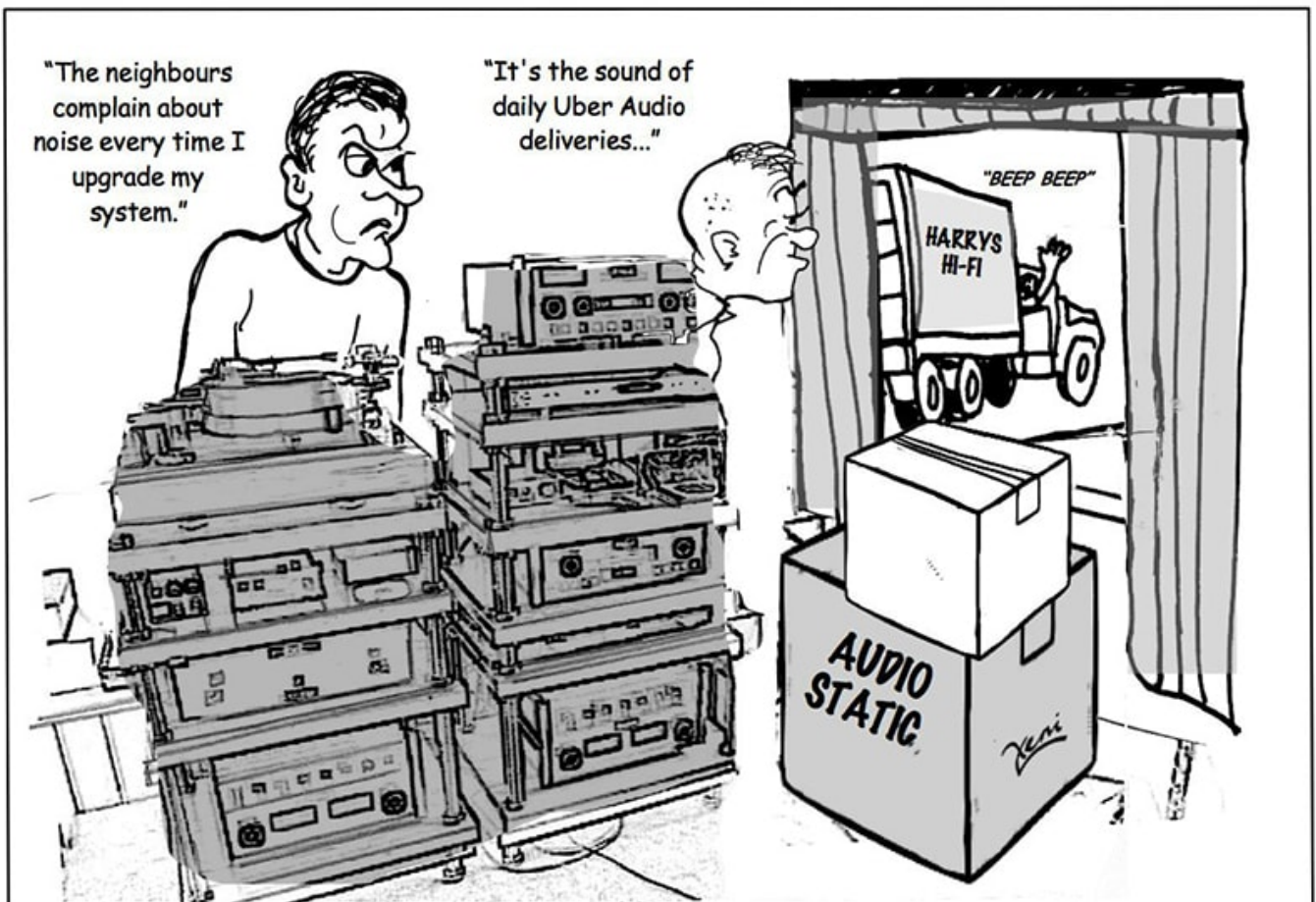
— Mary Oliver, *A Thousand Mornings*

Header image courtesy of [Wikimedia Commons/Bryan Ledgard](#).

# Uber Upgrades

[Audio Static](#)

Written by Peter Xenii



# Diamonds and Rust

[Audio Anthropology](#)

Written by Frank Doris





Point taken: yes, you could get a Grado XTE+1 cartridge for \$19.95 in the 1970s ("the free nickel bag of high-end audio," as my late friend Bob Reina called it), or a Joseph Grado Signature Model 3M for \$200. For old school 78 RPM Full Tone, go with those RCA Victor steel needles. Author's collection.





# You can be sure... if it's Westinghouse



Gangway for Listening Pleasure! That's the battle cry when the family races for the new Westinghouse radio-phonograph. Dad knew when he bought it that he could be sure of honest engineering, the highest quality performance, and the finest cabinetry, because that's what he'd learned to expect from every Westinghouse product.

But now—these kids can sure run fast—he wishes he'd taken a tip from Mother, who knows about Westinghouse, too, and has a Westinghouse table model in the kitchen for her very own. Of course, there's a moral . . . buy more than one Westinghouse!



The set shown is the 191. See and hear it at your dealer's today . . . then compare it with any set in town costing a hundred dollars more! It has Rainbow Tone FM, super-sensitive AM, an automatic intermix record changer, and a Regency cabinet in rich mahogany veneers. There are many other Westinghouse radios and radio-phonographs, each a leading performer in its price class. Home Radio Division, Westinghouse Electric Corporation, Sunbury, Pa.

Listen... and you'll buy **Westinghouse**

Tune in Ted Malone every morning Monday through Friday ABC Network

In 1948, you could console yourself with music. Hey kids, put those records away when you're done!  
From vintageadbrowser.com.



Spotted at Audio Classics: Acoustic Research AR-3 loudspeakers. The AR-3 premiered in 1958 and features the first production dome tweeter and midrange driver, plus a 12-inch cone woofer.



One of the coolest-looking sets of speaker-level controls ever. AR-3, rear panel.

AR-3 photos by Howard Kneller, audio reviewer, writer, and photographer whose work has appeared in *SoundStage!*, *Sound & Vision* and elsewhere. His audio and art photography can be found on Instagram ([@howardkneller](#), [@howardkneller.photog](#)) and Facebook ([@howardkneller](#)).

# No Respect

[The Run-Out Groove](#)

Written by James Whitworth

A handwritten signature in black ink on a yellow background. The signature reads "WHITWORTH." with a period at the end. The letter "W" is stylized with a large loop on the left side.



"I ASKED IF IT WOULD DISPLAY  
TEXT AND THIS IS ALL  
I COULD GET."

# Up In the Cheap Seats

## [Parting Shot](#)

Taken by Michael Walker



The [Coronado Performing Arts Center](#), Rockford, Illinois, Row NN, Seat 13. Rick Nielsen of Cheap Trick was an honorary member of the committee to restore the theater, and donated an undisclosed amount toward its renovation. When asked what he wanted to be written on a plaque to be displayed in the lobby, he initially didn't want to be recognized, but then remembered a first kiss as a kid way up in the balcony and asked for the chair instead.

